

**H.R. 1584, H.R. 1647, H.R. 3047,
H.R. 3173, H.R. 6852, AND H.R. 7332**

LEGISLATIVE HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 1584, TO ESTABLISH PLUM ISLAND, NEW YORK, AS A NATIONAL MONUMENT, “PLUM ISLAND NATIONAL MONUMENT ACT”; H.R. 1647, TO REDESIGNATE THE SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AS THE “SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK”, AND FOR THE PURPOSES, “SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK REDESIGNATION AND BOUNDARY STUDY ACT”; H.R. 3047, TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO CONVEY CERTAIN LANDS WITHIN THE APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, “APACHE COUNTY AND NAVAJO COUNTY CONVEYANCE ACT OF 2023”; H.R. 3173, TO PROVIDE FOR TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LANDS IN NORTHERN NEVADA, TO AUTHORIZE THE DISPOSAL OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LANDS IN NORTHERN NEVADA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TO PROMOTE CONSERVATION IN NORTHERN NEVADA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, “NORTHERN NEVADA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION ACT OF 2023”; H.R. 6852, TO DESIGNATE HOLCOMBE RUCKER PARK, IN HARLEM, NEW YORK, AS A NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE SITE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, “HOLCOMBE RUCKER PARK LANDMARK ACT”; AND H.R. 7332, TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR AND THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO CONVEY CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND TO THE STATE OF UTAH FOR INCLUSION IN CERTAIN STATE PARKS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, “UTAH STATE PARKS ADJUSTMENT ACT”

Thursday, March 7, 2024
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m. in Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Tom Tiffany [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Tiffany, Stauber, Curtis, Bentz, Westerman; and Neguse.

Also present: Representatives Amodei, Crane, LaLota, Maloy; and Espallat.

Mr. TIFFANY. The Subcommittee on Federal Lands will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess of the Subcommittee at any time.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to consider six bills: H.R. 1584, the Plum Island National Monument Act; H.R. 1647, Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act; H.R. 3047, Apache County and Navajo County Conveyance Act of 2023; H.R. 3173, Northern Nevada Economic

Development and Conservation Act of 2023; H.R. 6852, Holcombe Rucker Park Landmark Act; and H.R. 7332, Utah State Parks Adjustment Act.

I ask unanimous consent that the following Members be allowed to participate in today's hearing from the dais: the gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Amodei; the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Moulton; the gentleman from New York, Mr. Espallat; the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Crane; the gentleman from New York, Mr. LaLota; and the gentlewoman from Utah, Ms. Maloy.

Without objection, so ordered.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at hearings are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member. I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted in accordance with Committee Rule 3(o).

Without objection, So ordered.

I will now recognize myself for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. TOM TIFFANY, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

Mr. TIFFANY. Today's hearing includes several pieces of legislation that may seem different, but all have one very important thing in common: they are the product of people in local communities, not Washington, DC, coming together to enact meaningful change.

During my time as the Chairman of this Subcommittee, I have emphasized the importance of coordination between Federal land managers and the local and state officials who know this land best. I firmly believe that it is the people who live closest to public lands who are the best suited to inform the decisions governing their use. While some of the bills on today's agenda are not perfect, and I have serious questions I would like answered, I am still grateful to all the local people on the ground who have come together to negotiate and make compromises.

Unfortunately, these compromises are only needed in the first place because these communities are surrounded by vast amounts of Federal land. Alpine and Pinedale, for example, are two small communities in Arizona that have struggled to find available space to expand their respective cemeteries. Without adequate expansion, the cemeteries will soon run out of burial plots, and local families will be forced to travel long distances to bury their loved ones. H.R. 3047, which is led by Representative Crane, would convey two small parcels of adjacent Forest Service land to accommodate these expansions. I applaud Representative Crane for his leadership on this common-sense proposal that will address a very real need for two communities in his district.

Utah is another western state with a significant amount of Federal land. In fact, 64 percent of Utah's territory is managed by the Federal Government. In an effort to improve the management of public lands in that state, H.R. 7332, offered by Representative Maloy, authorizes thoughtful conveyances of isolated inholdings and adjacent Federal lands that would be more efficiently managed by the state. This bill will improve the already-renowned State Park System in Utah, while alleviating some clear land management inefficiencies on the Federal side. In total, this legislation will

transfer roughly 782 acres of Federal land to the state of Utah. This is a good bill, and I commend Representative Maloy for her leadership on this effort.

Nevada leads all states in terms of Federal footprint, with over 80 percent of its land mass under Federal control. The dearth of private and locally-controlled lands creates considerable challenges for rural communities and their efforts to generate economic activity and provide important public services. H.R. 3173, which is being led by Congressman Amodei, reflects a sincere effort to balance competing needs and desires for economic development, public purposes, and conservation goals. This bill allows for the conveyance of up to 180,000 acres of Federal lands for a variety of public purposes and economic opportunities. This will allow for some much-needed economic growth and new job creation in northern Nevada.

As I noted before, I do have some concerns with this proposal, and I look forward to learning more information about this legislation during today's hearing.

Finally, we are considering a bill from Representative LaLota to conserve Plum Island in New York. Plum Island is best known as the location of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center. This center was a joint endeavor operated by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Homeland Security, and was used to conduct research on contagious animal diseases for several decades. There is strong local support for conserving the unique and at times mysterious history of Plum Island, and I commend Representative LaLota for his fierce advocacy on behalf of his constituents.

I want to thank all the Members on both sides of our dais for their work on the legislation before us today.

I also want to express my appreciation to all the witnesses for being here to provide your invaluable testimony.

I would especially like to acknowledge Deputy Director Mike Reynolds, who is going to be retiring later this month after more than 39 years of service. Deputy Director Reynolds is one of the National Park Service's longest serving leaders. I understand that this will likely be Mr. Reynolds' last time testifying on behalf of the National Park Service.

And I want to take a moment to thank you. Thank you for your dedicated service to the National Park Service. Congratulations on your retirement. Come visit us in Wisconsin when you get time.

With that, I will now recognize Ranking Member Neguse for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. JOE NEGUSE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF COLORADO**

Mr. NEGUSE. I thank the Chairman. I trust that he won't ask too many probing questions of Mr. Reynolds, given this is his last hearing.

[Laughter.]

Mr. NEGUSE. I am sure he is looking forward to it. But in any event, thank you to our witnesses. Thank you to the Chairman. Thank you to the Members. It is always good to be back in the

Federal Lands Subcommittee, as evidenced by the list of bills that we are reviewing today.

This Subcommittee truly is a workhorse of the Congress. That was the case in the last Congress, when I served as Chairman of this Subcommittee, and I am grateful that that has continued to be the case under Chairman Tiffany, and I am grateful to him for putting together a list of bills here that I think encompass the greatness of our country, the breadth and the mosaic of our country.

Putting our policy disagreements aside, I am always amazed by the variety of places throughout our country that we consider in this Committee. Today alone, as we have heard from the Chairman, we will review proposals impacting lands in New York, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Utah, a broad representation of this great country, and, of course, joined by witnesses representing many of these incredible places.

Before I get into specifics of the bills, I think it is important to take a moment to sort of zoom out. This is a big week in Congress, of course. Later today, President Biden is scheduled to deliver his State of the Union to a joint session of Congress. In that speech, I suspect that we will hear how Democrats, working again in good faith, have delivered historic investments in infrastructure for America, making generational strides towards addressing the climate crisis and, in the context of the work that we do on this Subcommittee, leading the charge to enact significant support for our public lands, including investments that prioritize addressing wildfires and drought across the Rocky Mountain West, of course, near and dear to my heart as a Representative of the great state of Colorado, and continuing to support public land restoration projects throughout the country. I hope that this Subcommittee can continue to build on the investments that we made in the last Congress as we look forward towards our summer and fall agenda.

I would just say that we have a number of bills today that I am certainly very excited about. I know that we have a number of bills from my Republican colleagues.

I welcome, of course, our newest member to the Natural Resources Committee, Representative Maloy, who I haven't had a chance to meet yet, but congratulations on your election.

And I am looking forward to hearing more about her bill, as well as the two other Republican bills we are considering: H.R. 1584, which would designate a new national monument; and H.R. 3173, which includes both new wilderness and mineral withdrawals.

And while I recognize that the designations in Mr. Amodei's bills come in the context of a long list of other items, and I am grateful for his bringing these bills forward together, I hope it can be a sign of perhaps more to come in future hearings from our Republican colleagues in terms of place-based conservation. There are a variety of Democratic members as well as Republican members who proposed on that front, and hopefully we can consider them in future hearings, including a bill that I have introduced, the CORE Act, which I hope we can consider.

Each of the Democratic bills that we are considering today reflect the support and hard work of the constituents in these respective areas who want to see their public lands protected for future

generations. So, I am just, again, grateful for the work done by our colleagues.

Two bills in particular that I want to highlight, first and foremost, my good friend and colleague, the distinguished gentleman from Harlem, Representative Espaillat, who has led the effort to designate Holcombe Rucker Park in New York, and I know we are very excited to hear about that, particularly those of us who are basketball aficionados. I am grateful to Representative Espaillat for his efforts to preserve a critical part of the American experience; and, of course, Representative Moulton, as well, whose bill to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Massachusetts is an important step forward.

Again, I am grateful to my colleagues, grateful to the Chairman, and looking forward to hearing from the witnesses.

I will yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you to the Ranking Member for his opening statement. Now, I would like to recognize Representative Espaillat for 5 minutes on his bill, H.R. 6852.

The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin, I would like to motion to submit roughly 25 letters from community leaders in support of the Holcombe Rucker Park Landmark Act into the record.

Mr. TIFFANY. So ordered.

[The information follows:]

The following documents were submitted for the record by Rep. Espaillat. It includes letters of support for H.R. 6852—the Holcombe Rucker Park Landmark Act from the following:

1. The Rucker Family
2. The Marius Family
3. Lloyd A. Williams, President, The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce
4. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, NYPL
5. Madison Square Boys and Girls Club
6. The Boys and Girls Club of Harlem
7. The Harlem Cultural Archives
8. WE ACT for Environmental Justice
9. Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement
10. Polo Grounds Towers Tenants Association
11. The Honorable Congressman Charlie B. Rangel
12. The Honorable Councilman Abreau of New York
13. The Honorable Senator Cordell Cleare of New York
14. Manhattan Community Board 10
15. Jackie Rowe, CEO and Founder, Harlem Mothers and Fathers Stop Another Violent End (S.A.V.E.)
16. H. Carl McCall, Chairman Emeritus, State University of New York
17. Harlem Globetrotter Bobby Hunter
18. Harlem Globetrotter Bob McCullough
19. Film Producer Bob McCullough Jr.
20. C. Virginia Fields is the President and CEO of the National Black Leadership Commission on Health
21. Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine
22. Keisha Sutton-James, Manhattan Deputy Borough President
23. The Honorable Assemblyman Al Taylor of New York City
24. The Honorable Judge Tingling, Chair, West Harlem Development Corporation

These documents are part of the hearing record and are being retained in the Committee's official files:

The documents are available for viewing at:

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II10/20240307/116866/HHRG-118-II10-20240307-SD003.pdf>

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to all the esteemed members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands. And thank you to the Rucker family, the Marius family, and the McCullough family. The Rucker family is represented by Phil Rucker; and we have Stacey Marius, also from the Marius family; and Bob McCullough, Jr., also.

Also, I want to thank Community Board 10 and its chairperson for advocating for this particular initiative, and other Harlem leaders who are here in person or watching virtually in support of H.R. 6852, the Holcombe Rucker Park landmark.

Today, I stand before you to advocate for a cause that is not only rooted in history, but also deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of our nation: the Federal recognition of Holcombe Rucker Park. In the 1950s, Holcombe Rucker, a World War II veteran and scholar, had a vision to provide a safe haven to the youth of Harlem to steer them away from the streets and towards higher education. Rucker initiated the Rucker Pro League and a basketball tournament that promoted athleticism and emphasized academic excellence.

Weekend afternoons in the 1960s and 1970s saw the convergence of great basketball legends at Rucker Park, from Dr. J, Julius Erving, to Nate "Tiny" Archibald, Wilt the Stilt Chamberlain, and Connie Hawkins. And we have with us today, Mr. Chairman, a legend in his own right, Bobby "Zorro" Hunter, a Harlem Globetrotter who I am sure will throw a no-look pass to Mr. Neguse. I am not sure if he will be able to catch it, but I hope that he will.

[Laughter.]

Mr. ESPAILLAT. The court at Rucker Park witnessed unparalleled talent and fierce competition. The Rucker motto is, "Each one teach one." It underscores the commitment to mentorship and academic achievement leading to 700 scholarships for aspiring athletes.

In 1967, Rucker legend Robert "Bob" McCullough, whose documentary film producer son, Bob McCullough, Jr., is here with us today, founded "Each One Teach One," a not-for-profit dedicated to empowering youth, carrying forward the Rucker legacy.

Throughout the years, Rucker Park evolved, embracing the intersection of sports and culture. Greg Marius, founder of the Entertainer's Basketball Classic, bridged the worlds of basketball and hip hop, transforming Rucker into a cultural phenomenon.

Eventually, multiple NBA stars, such as Kobe Bryant, Kevin Durant, LeBron James, Jamal Crawford, Lamar Odom, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and my favorite, Earl the Pearl Monroe, participated in the park's basketball tournament before becoming famous in the NBA.

In June 2017, New York City honored Marius by renaming the park's court after him, recognizing his pivotal role in preserving and shaping the park's legacy.

Rucker Park isn't just a basketball court; it is a symbol of resilience, empowerment, and unity. It has inspired generations of athletes and served as a catalyst for social change. Today, I urge you to support H.R. 6852. By granting Federal recognition to Rucker Park, we can ensure its preservation for future generations. We can honor its rich history, celebrate its cultural significance, and continue its legacy of mentorship and community empowerment.

Together, let us ensure that Rucker Park remains a shining example of the power of sports to uplift and unite all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Mr. Espaillat. And Earl the Pearl did not have to travel far to go play in Madison Square Garden, did he?

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Not far at all.

[Laughter.]

Mr. TIFFANY. I would now like to recognize Representative Crane for 5 minutes on H.R. 3047.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ELIJAH CRANE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing and to speak in support of my bill. This piece of legislation is one of the first bills I introduced in Congress, and is a testament to Arizona's pioneer heritage.

For more than a decade, the communities of Pinedale and Alpine have struggled to find appropriate cemetery space to meet the needs of family members wishing to enter and pay respects to their loved ones. Specifically, my bill would enable Navajo and Apache Counties to expand the land adjacent to Alpine Community Cemetery, preventing the need for deceased members of the community to be laid to rest in a distant cemetery.

As I said, the community of Pinedale has a long and rich pioneer history, and the residents are proud of that heritage. This bill will allow families to lay their loved ones to rest in the place that their family member loved so much.

I am happy that I can be a part of this hearing today and hear from Daryl Seymore from Navajo County, who was instrumental in raising awareness and support of this project.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Mr. Crane. I will now recognize Representative LaLota for 5 minutes on H.R. 1584.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. NICK LALOTA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and all the members of the Federal Lands Subcommittee for hosting this important hearing. I represent much of Suffolk County in the east end of Long Island, and I am here today to speak in favor of my legislation, H.R. 1584, the Plum Island National Monument Act.

For those who might not know, the 840-acre Plum Island is located in Suffolk County, in the town of Southold, about 3 miles northeast of Orient Point and about 12 miles northwest of Montauk Point. And Plum Island has a significant history with our Federal Government. In 1954, the Plum Island Animal Disease Center was established on Plum Island and managed by the United States Department of Agriculture. For decades, the hard-working and dedicated folks at the Animal Disease Center conducted important research on foreign animal diseases and worked to prevent the introduction and spread of those diseases here in the United States.

In 2005, after five decades of work, the Plum Island Animal Disease Center was ordered closed and ordered to relocate to Manhattan, Kansas. At the time, the Department of Homeland Security was required by law to sell Plum Island to the highest bidder. But thankfully, several years ago, Congress was successful in stopping the sale, allowing for future efforts to preserve Plum Island.

I am extremely proud of the work that the folks at the Center have done. However, the Center's time on the island is quickly coming to a close. I recently had the privilege of visiting Plum Island with my colleague from the other side of the aisle, Representative Courtney from Connecticut, and while I was there, I witnessed firsthand the critical need of protecting and preserving Plum Island.

Though much has been done to ensure the island's environmental and ecological makeup, we must all work together to preserve Plum Island once and for all. My legislation, H.R. 1584, the Plum Island National Monument Act, would do just that by designating Plum Island as a national monument.

Over the past 15 months, I have spoken to hundreds of constituents and advocacy groups on the important work ahead to preserve Plum Island, and I will continue my work here in Congress to do just that. Today, we will hear from several witnesses, including Long Island's own Louise Harrison, who can speak on how important Plum Island is and its preservation is to Long Islanders and surrounding areas.

Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member, and the members of the Committee for inviting me here today to discuss my important legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Representative LaLota. I will now recognize Representative Maloy for 5 minutes on H.R. 7332.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. CELESTE MALOY, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH**

Ms. MALOY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

H.R. 7332, the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act, is a land conveyance bill that would transfer approximately 782 acres of Federal land to the state of Utah for inclusion in the Utah State Park System. The parcels included in this conveyance consist of Federal lands that are either adjacent to or comprise inholdings within current state park boundaries. The bill would convey six small parcels of BLM land, collectively amounting to about 280 acres, to Antelope

Island State Park. These six plots are inholding owned by BLM that are located within Antelope Island's existing boundaries.

The legislation would also convey a single parcel of approximately 272 acres of Forest Service land to Fremont Indian State Park. This parcel is directly adjacent to Fremont Indian's current boundaries in Sevier County.

Finally, the bill would convey several parcels of BLM land collectively totaling roughly 230 acres within and adjacent to Wasatch Mountain State Park.

Utah State Parks are well managed and cared for, and I am proud to sponsor this bill alongside my colleague, Senator Mike Lee, which would remove the ineffective bureaucratic management over these small parcels of land, and give them local control that makes more sense, where they could be better managed. Conveying these properties from the Federal estate to the state parks would pave the way for needed improvements in land and natural resources management.

The Bureau of Land Management testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that this bill would improve manageability and dispose of isolated Federal parcels that are difficult to manage. BLM testified in support of the legislation. The U.S. Forest Service has expressed a desire to work on some specific concerns. I look forward to working with them to address those concerns.

This is a good bill. It helps protect resources and improve management.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you very much for your testimony. I refuse the ascension to Speaker.

[Laughter.]

Mr. TIFFANY. But I will politely turn that down.

Mr. NEGUSE. You never know.

[Laughter.]

Mr. TIFFANY. But no, thank you very much for your testimony. Now, I would like to recognize Representative Amodei for 5 minutes in regards to the bill that he has forwarded.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. MARK E. AMODEI, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEVADA

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member. I was pleased to hear, by the way, for your record, Mark Amodei, Nevada's 2nd Congressional District, which is Nevada's original congressional district. No offense to the people in Las Vegas.

I appreciate hearing the references from both of you about decisions made closest to the ground are best, and placed-based decisions regarding Federal land use. As you have noted, my state is the largest state, percentage-wise, in terms of Federal ownership, not lamenting that fact, that is just the fact. Every single city, town, unincorporated town in Nevada, including Las Vegas, needs to come through these halls, this Subcommittee and this Committee, in order to grow in some sort of rational fashion.

This bill represents the compilation of a lot of tune-up for bills that have come through previously, but also some new stuff

regarding two counties, regarding Pershing County and also Douglas County.

It should be noted, though, when you talk about place-based decisions, we don't write lands bills in my office for my district. We let the locals who have planning and zoning authority over that, those county commissions, those city councils, they tell us what they want. It is our job to get that drafted and bring it before this Subcommittee and this Committee for your consideration.

As a matter of fact, one of the pieces of this is the Pershing County lands bill which has already been before this Subcommittee and this Committee, and processed in the 115th Congress by consent in this Committee and by voice vote on the Floor. I won't tell you who on the Committee at the time voted for it, but it is easy to figure out who it is. Not saying therefore you should vote for it now, I am just saying this is not some new-fangled thing.

I know there is some concern about some of the amounts of wilderness and stuff that is being removed from oil and gas exploration, specifically the Ruby Mountains in Elko County after some applications for leasing for oil and gas exploration went through the NEPA process and were denied by the Forest Service without appeal or objection.

Once again, place-based decisions, Elko County Commission, all that other sort of stuff were like, "We are OK if that area, 300-and-some-odd-thousand acres, is not available for oil and gas leasing."

Mind what I said. It is not being designated as wilderness. There are still multiple use opportunities in there. But it is not available for oil and gas leasing.

When you look at the rest of these proposals, in aggregate, it is about a four-to-one ratio, 4 acres of wilderness or other type of special status versus an acre of economic development. And by the way, the economic development, when you look at the bills that comprise this, a lot of this is municipal, flood control, those sorts of things, not sex and violence, not slice-and-dice Veg-O-Matic for developers, but taking care of business in counties where some of the Federal estate is needed in order to do responsible things at the local level or the state level.

So, I would be happy to respond for any questions. I do want to say that it is a privilege to be here at the same hearing when we are talking about Tiny Archibald and Earl the Pearl Monroe, and folks like that.

And I want to let the Ranking Member know that I did catch a pass from a Globetrotter in the hall outside this building.

[Laughter.]

Mr. AMODEI. So, I wasn't a diva, I needed to go to the gym to do that.

One final thing, which I am sure will be phenomenally influential is I appreciate the reference to the Rocky Mountain West, but those of us from other areas of the West between that other thing called the Sierra Nevadas, if you think about it, or you slip, it is the Intermountain West, Mr. Ranking Member, just if you can toss me a bone, not in this meeting, but some other time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you to the gentleman from Nevada. And now we are going to move on to our second panel. I want to thank the Representatives that attended here to introduce their bills.

I want to remind the witnesses that under Committee Rules, you must limit your oral statement to 5 minutes. But your entire statement will appear in the hearing record.

To begin your testimony, you know the lights and all the rest, right?

First, I would like to introduce Mr. Greg Smith, Associate Deputy Chief of the National Forest System.

Associate Deputy Chief Smith, you are recognized for 5 minutes. Welcome back to the Committee.

**STATEMENT OF GREG SMITH, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY CHIEF,
NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM, U.S. FOREST SERVICE,
WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. SMITH. Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to share a USDA Forest Service perspective on three public lands bills under consideration today. My name is Greg Smith. I have worked in the Forest Service for over 30 years. I currently serve as the Associate Deputy Chief of the National Forest System.

Our national forests and grasslands are critical to the well-being of our nation. The Forest Service plays an important role in providing for multiple uses and benefits from these lands to the public. The Forest Service manages over 193 million acres of national forest and grasslands across the country for public purposes, including wildland fire, recreation, grazing, timber, watershed conservation, wildlife habitat, and many more.

These three bills under consideration today with the U.S. Forest Service interests, I will briefly give our perspective on these bills.

H.R. 3047, the Apache County and Navajo County Conveyance Act of 2023, would require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey one parcel to Navajo County, Arizona, and two parcels to Apache County, Arizona. The Department supports this legislation, as it provides a straightforward and common-sense solution to cemetery management. However, the Department has concerns regarding the time frame for the conveyances, and we would like to work with the Committee and the bill's sponsor on the aspects of the bill.

H.R. 7332, the Utah State Park Adjustments Act, would convey several parcels of land under Federal jurisdiction to various Utah state parks. The bill would require the Secretary of Agriculture to require and convey approximately 272 acres of Fishlake National Forest national forest lands in Sevier County, Utah to the state of Utah.

The parcels include a public campground, an important public entry point to a non-motorized historical trail. The parcel also contains a grazing allotment and water rights currently held by the Forest Service.

The Department has concerns with the Fremont Indian State Park conveyance as described in H.R. 7332. These concerns relate to issues such as the time frames, future access to Forest Service roads and trail easements, maintaining current public uses, as well

as some of the maps. The Department would like to work with the bill's sponsors and the Committee to address these concerns to ensure continued public use and enjoyment of these lands.

H.R. 3173, the Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2023, contains multiple provisions that impact management of National Forest System lands on behalf of the American public. The bill would dispose of or convey National Forest System lands to various entities within the state of Nevada, Douglas County, Washoe Tribe, and direct the Department to issue special use permits or enter into cooperative management agreements.

It would also require the Department to convey two parcels to the Incline Village General Improvement District in Nevada.

The bill would also withdraw Ruby Mountains from all forms of operations under the mineral leasing laws, subject to validating existing rights, and would convey a portion of the Carson City for roadway.

Additionally, the bill would create an interagency complex on the Forest Service parcel located in Reno, Nevada.

The Department maintains a strong partnership with local, state, and Federal agencies, recognize Federal tribes and non-government organizations to manage national forests in the state of Nevada.

The national forest also includes the crown jewels which we consider, such as the Lake Tahoe Management Area and the Ruby Mountains.

The Department does not support Title I, Title II, and Title V, as written, but we would like to work with Congress, the Committee, and the bill's sponsor to clarify language to develop the maps to ensure accuracy and support of implementation.

The Department supports Title IV, and are not opposed to Title VII, but we have some concerns about funding and construction time frames.

We look forward to working with you, and I appreciate the opportunity to join and testify here today. Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my remarks, and I look forward to any questioning that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GREG SMITH, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY CHIEF, NATIONAL
FOREST SYSTEM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOREST SERVICE

ON H.R. 3047, H.R. 7332, AND H.R. 3173

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, to discuss H.R. 3047, the "Apache County and Navajo County Conveyance Act of 2023," H.R. 7332, the "Utah State Parks Adjustment Act" and H.R. 3173, the "Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2023."

H.R. 3047, "Apache County and Navajo County Conveyance Act of 2023"

H.R. 3047 would require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a parcel of land depicted on a map as "Pinedale Cemetery Expansion" on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests to Navajo County, Arizona, and to convey two parcels of land generally depicted as "Existing Alpine Cemetery" and "proposed Townsite Tract" both located on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Arizona to Apache County, Arizona.

The Department supports this legislation as it provides a straightforward and commonsense solution to cemetery management; however, the Department has concerns regarding the timeline for the conveyance in the legislation, and we would like to work with the Committee and the sponsor to address that aspect of this proposal.

H.R. 7332, “Utah State Parks Adjustment Act”

H.R. 7332, the “Utah State Parks Adjustment Act” would convey several parcels of federal land under different federal jurisdictions to various Utah State parks. The act would require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey approximately 272 acres of NFS lands in Sevier County, Utah.

The parcel described by the Fremont Indian State Park Conveyance is managed by the Forest Service and includes a public campground, remnants of a historic guard station with an associated interpretive site, and an important entry point to a non-motorized historic trail, all of which are open to the public. The parcel also contains part of a grazing allotment under permit by the Fishlake National Forest and water rights held by the Forest Service that provide water to the campground, Forest Service pack stock, and potentially to livestock on the permitted allotment.

The Department has concerns with the Fremont Indian State Park Conveyance as described in H.R. 7332. These concerns relate to certain details for the proposed conveyance, including prescribed time frames and diligence, future access by the Forest Service for road and trail easements, addressing current public uses, and procedures for resolving conflicts between the maps, acreage estimates and legal descriptions. The Department would like to work with the bill sponsors and the Committee to address specific concerns related to the conveyance to ensure continued public use and enjoyment of these lands.

H.R. 3173, “Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2023”

H.R. 3173, the “Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2023” contains multiple provisions that impact management of National Forest System lands on behalf of the American public.

Title I would convey or dispose of National Forest System lands managed by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. This title also provides authority to transfer administrative jurisdiction over Santini-Burton Act parcels in the Lake Tahoe Basin to the county or state and directs the agency to enter into special use permits or cooperative management agreements with Douglas County for identified parcels on both units.

Title II would convey lands managed by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to the Incline Village General Improvement District. Title IV would withdraw the Ruby Mountains from all forms of operation under the mineral leasing laws. Title VII would require the Department and the Bureau of Land Management to develop a federal interagency complex on a Forest Service parcel in Reno.

The Department maintains strong partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies; federally recognized Tribes; and nongovernmental organizations to manage national forests in the State of Nevada, including crown jewels of the National Forest System such as Lake Tahoe and the Ruby Mountains. The Department recognizes that our management must support conservation and economic opportunity, tribal rights and interests, and we strive to meet those goals through shared stewardship. The Department has successfully used our existing authorities to provide for recreation and public purposes under special use permits or agreements and to convey or dispose of lands as appropriate.

The Department does not support H.R. 3173 as written, specifically Titles I, II, and V, and we would like to work with the Committee and the bill sponsor to address the Department’s concerns, which I will broadly outline in my testimony. In addition, many of the maps associated with the bill appear to contain mapping errors. We would appreciate the opportunity to develop legislative maps to ensure accuracy and support implementation.

Title I—Douglas County

Title I would convey National Forest System lands to various entities including the State of Nevada, Douglas County, and the Washoe Tribe; designate National Forest System lands for disposal; and direct the Department to issue special use permits or enter into cooperative management agreements, as well as other provisions.

Title I would convey or dispose of numerous parcels that are more appropriately retained in National Forest System management, including acquired lands and Forest Service administrative sites. The Department would like to work with the Committee to identify parcels appropriate for conveyance or disposal, develop

legislative maps, and revise the language regarding conveyances and disposal processes and the terms surrounding these, such as reversionary clauses and timelines.

Regarding provisions directing the Department to issue special use permits or enter into cooperating agreements, the Department has existing authority to do both and would still be required to conduct National Environmental Policy Act analyses, comply with the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106, and meet other standard requirements. The goals of Title I, Section 112, relating to the Tahoe Rim Trail have been accomplished through an agreement with partners.

Title I, Section 121, would require the Department to hold certain lands in trust for the Washoe Tribe while retaining the Department's ability to carry out fuel reductions and landscape restoration activities. We recognize that Federal lands and waters managed by the Department are the traditional homelands of American Indians and Alaska Natives and we support Tribal self-determination. We would like to note that the Department of the Interior, not USDA, typically acquires land into trust because it has the authority to manage trust lands. We would like to work with the sponsors on clarifying that language. We would also like to work with the sponsor to develop legislative maps for this section to ensure accuracy and support implementation.

Title I, Sec. 141, provides new authority to transfer Forest Service land that is located within the boundaries of the area acquired under Public Law 96-586 (commonly known as the Santini-Burton Act parcels). These environmentally sensitive lands acquired by the Department are required to be managed in alignment with the Santini-Burton Act to maintain undeveloped open space; preserve the land's natural characteristics; and protect water quality, stream environment zones, and important wildlife habitat. The Department believes these lands should be retained under National Forest System management.

Title II—Incline Village Fire Protection

Title II would require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey two parcels of approximately 14.10 acres to the Incline Village General Improvement District in Nevada. These environmentally sensitive lands were acquired by the Department to maintain undeveloped open space; preserve the land's natural characteristics; and protect water quality, stream environment zones, and important wildlife habitat. The Department believes these lands should be retained and managed as part of the National Forest System.

Title IV—Ruby Mountains Protection Act

Title IV withdraws 309,272 acres of NFS land in the Ruby Mountains on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Nevada from all forms of operation under the mineral leasing laws. The Administration supports the proposed withdrawal, which aligns with the President's vision to boost conservation strategies and policies to preserve public, private, and Tribal areas of interest. The proposed withdrawal would be subject to valid existing rights. Existing leases and associated activities can continue as long as those leases were established at or prior to the time of the withdrawal.

The remainder of the Ruby Mountains managed by the Forest Service is designated as Wilderness. The Ruby Mountains offer extensive cultural, scenic, and ecological values that help to support a \$165 million recreation industry in Elko County. The area includes wildlife habitat for species including greater sage grouse, and the federally listed Lahontan cutthroat trout. The area also supports the state's largest mule deer herd and an important migration corridor. Mapping of the area has determined that there is little to no potential for oil or gas resources because of unfavorable geologic conditions.

The Department conducted a detailed analysis for oil and gas leasing availability on a portion of lands within the Ruby Mountains. In March 2019, the agency released a draft Decision Notice and final Environmental Assessment concluding that no leasing should occur due to the low potential for oil and gas resources in the area and extensive citizen and community involvement with strong support for no leasing at this time. The decision notice was signed by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Supervisor on May 7, 2019.

Title V—Carson City Public Lands Correction

Sec. 503, "Carson City Street Connector Conveyance" would convey a portion of the land occupied by the Department Carson Ranger District Office to Carson City for a roadway. This conveyance would significantly impair the operations of the district office. The Department does not support this provision.

Title VII—Federal Complex

Title VII requires the Department and the Bureau of Land Management to establish a federal interagency complex. In addition to the Forest Supervisor's Office for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and the BLM Nevada State Office, the complex would house the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Western Nevada Agency, and the Bureau of Reclamation. The Department and BLM would have the option to relocate their Carson City offices to the complex as well. Funding for the complex would be available through the proceeds of disposal under Titles I, V and VI of the legislation (up to ten percent of the amount in these special accounts), with the agencies authorized to use any other accounts to fund the balance. The Department has concerns regarding the implementation of Title VII, including costs due to lack of existing infrastructure and the need to align with Department procedures and legal requirements for facility relocation.

That concludes my testimony. Again, I thank Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present the views of the Department on this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Mr. Smith, for your testimony. I would now like to recognize Mr. Mike Reynolds, Deputy Director for External and Congressional Relations at the National Park Service. Deputy Director Reynolds, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MIKE REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. REYNOLDS. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on three of the bills on today's agenda. I would like to submit our full statement for the record and summarize the Department's views.

I would also like to submit statements for the record for two other bills: H.R. 3173, the Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2023; and H.R. 7732, the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act. These statements were prepared by the Bureau of Land Management, and we would request that any questions about these bills be referred to them.

H.R. 1584 would establish Plum Island, New York as a national monument for the purpose of ecological conservation, historic preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage. The bill requires the Secretary of the Interior to establish administrative jurisdiction over portions of Plum Island as necessary to carry out the Act through a Memoranda of Understanding with each Federal department or agency with current administrative jurisdiction.

The Department appreciates the bill's intent to increase public access to and protect Plum Island's natural and cultural heritage, and we support that long-term goal. However, given the multiple hazards to human health and safety that may exist, we have serious concerns about the bill's requirement that the Department assume administrative jurisdiction over the island. With numerous tools at our disposal to support locally-led conservation and restoration efforts, the Department is committed to collaborating with the Subcommittee, the bill's sponsor, and the many Plum Island stakeholders as we explore ways to protect the island's valuable assets and address its many challenging environmental issues.

H.R. 1647 would redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site as a national historical park. The bill would also authorize a boundary study to evaluate any sites and resources located within the City of Salem, Massachusetts that are associated with Salem's maritime history, coastal defenses, or military history.

The Department supports H.R. 1647. The Department believes that redesignation of Salem Maritime National Historic Site as a national historic park is appropriate. As is reflected in its long history, Salem Maritime National Historic Site has expanded in the scope of its resources and its interpretation. The deeper and broader experience it now offers to visitors supports the basis for National Historical Park designation.

The Department also believes that the boundary study provided by H.R. 1647 would be beneficial. The study would be useful in identifying important maritime and coastal defense-related resources in the vicinity of Salem that are deserving of protection.

H.R. 6852 would designate Holcombe Rucker Park in New York City, New York as a national commemorative site. The bill specifies that the site would not be a unit of the National Park System. The Department supports bringing greater recognition to the achievements and the legacy of Holcombe Rucker, but has concerns about the use of the designation "national commemorative site."

The Department would encourage the proponents of providing greater recognition for Holcombe Rucker Park to explore alternative ways to honor and interpret the site's history and the contributions of Holcombe Rucker to outdoor recreation and urban America. The Department would be very pleased to work with the sponsor and his constituents to explore these options.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that you and the Subcommittee may have. [The prepared statement of Mr. Reynolds follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL T. REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR
CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
ON H.R. 1584, H.R. 1647, AND H.R. 6852

H.R. 1584, a bill to establish Plum Island, New York, as a National Monument

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 1584, a bill to establish Plum Island, New York, as a National Monument.

The Department appreciates the bill's intent to increase public access to and to protect Plum Island's natural and cultural heritage, and we support that goal. However, given the multiple hazards to human health and safety that may exist, we have serious concerns about the bill's requirement that the Department assume administrative jurisdiction over the island.

H.R. 1584 would establish Plum Island, NY, as a national monument for the purpose of "ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage." The bill requires the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to establish administrative jurisdiction over portions of Plum Island through memoranda of understanding with the head of each Federal department or agency with current administrative jurisdiction. It further requires the Secretary to develop a general management plan for the national monument and submit the plan to Congress no later than three years after funds are first made available for that purpose.

Plum Island is an 840-acre island located 1.5 miles northeast of Orient Point in Suffolk County, New York, within Long Island Sound. The island has been in federal government ownership since 1899, when it was purchased for the purposes of a coastal artillery post, later known as Fort Terry. In 1954, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) established the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) to conduct research on animal pathogens to protect farmers, ranchers, and the national food supply. Because of the nature of the research and hazards presented, access to the island and the research facility was restricted.

In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) assumed jurisdiction over the island and its facilities. The USDA continued its long-running science mission at PIADC jointly with DHS, which was charged with the safe and secure operation of the facility.

In 2008, Congress approved legislation requiring that Plum Island be sold to help fund the new DHS National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kansas. However, in response to sustained advocacy from community and environmental organizations to preserve Plum Island for public purposes, Congress approved legislation in 2020 preventing the sale of the island to a private party.

The Department recognizes Plum Island's tremendous biodiversity and wildlife habitats, as well as its rich cultural and historic assets. Notably, Plum Island provides a critical stopover habitat for migrating birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and is home to one of New York's largest seal haul-out sites. Researchers have identified over 200 species of birds, over 200 species of moths, 9 mammals, and 5 reptiles inhabiting Plum Island. Several federal or state-listed threatened or endangered species can be found on the island, including the piping plover (federally threatened) and the monarch butterfly (federal candidate species).

A number of historic buildings exist from the island's years as a military fort, including a fire station and Fort Terry, a National Register Historic Site, which was in use from 1897 until after World War II. The Plum Island Lighthouse, also a National Register Historic Site, was built in 1869 to help ships navigate near the entrance to Long Island Sound. In addition, several buildings of the PIADC research facility have been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Plum Island's long history of serving as a site for military operations and animal pathogen research has led to a series of ongoing environmental challenges. The DHS 2023 environmental assessment (EA) for the closure of the PIADC cites four categories of environmental concern that require remediation or preventative steps:

1. The PIADC biocontainment facilities must be decontaminated. The EA recommends that a decontamination process, complete validation testing, and soil testing be conducted at the three biocontainment facilities. Decontamination will include methods such as scrubbing, liquid cleaning, thermal disinfection via autoclaves, chemical disinfection, and fumigation. As a result of the use of cleaning chemicals such as formaldehyde and the thermal disinfection of nearly all equipment within the facility, once usable infrastructure at PIADC will be rendered unsafe for human occupation until this costly decontamination work can be completed.
2. A number of waste management areas must be remediated. The EA notes that DHS has worked closely with state and local health departments over the past three decades to investigate and successfully remediate numerous sites of concern, including removing buried waste, capping contaminated areas, and conducting soil and groundwater monitoring. However, 10 additional sites of concern require further action.
3. The EA recommends testing and remediation of subsurface oil contamination in and around the PIADC facilities.
4. Actions must be taken to prevent future environmental issues involving long-term storage of assets, including emergency generators, boilers, chillers, and, potentially, the island's Major Oil Storage Facility.

In addition to the issues outlined above, the Department foresees budgetary challenges—and potentially further environmental concerns—involved with rehabilitating or demolishing aging buildings, managing a costly marine transportation system, and upgrading island infrastructure to accommodate use in a manner that is safe and accessible for employees and the public. The island contains dozens of buildings and structures, water and power distribution systems, wastewater and sewage treatment plants, an emergency power plant, and electrical substations, and additional infrastructure. Significant funding would be required to adequately remediate, maintain, or remove this infrastructure, particularly if the Department were to open the island to public access. These costs would far exceed the Department's

available resources. Another concern, as noted in a letter submitted during the EA from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is the need for shoreline mitigation, which is particularly important given the vulnerability of Plum Island to sea level rise.

We share the bill sponsor's commitment to the preservation of Plum Island's unique wildlife habitat and its abundant historic resources. Through the America the Beautiful initiative, the Biden-Harris Administration has made a national commitment to support local efforts to conserve and restore America's natural areas for the many benefits they provide, including supporting biodiversity, providing safe spaces for outdoor recreation, and helping stem the climate crisis. The Department has numerous tools at its disposal to support locally-led conservation and restoration efforts, and we are committed to collaborating with the Subcommittee, the bill sponsor, and the many Plum Island stakeholders, as we explore ways to protect the island's valuable assets and address its many challenging environmental issues.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

H.R. 1647, to redesignate the Salem National Historic Site as the "Salem Maritime National Historical Park", and for other purposes

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the U.S. Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 1647, to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site as the "Salem Maritime National Historical Park", and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 1647.

H.R. 1647 would redesignate Salem Maritime National Historic Site as "Salem Maritime National Historical Park". The bill would also direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a boundary study to evaluate any sites and resources located within the city of Salem, Massachusetts that are associated with Salem's maritime history, coastal defenses, or military history, including National Guard and militia activity. This would include the Salem Armory Visitor Center and the Salem Armory Park. The bill provides for the boundary study to be completed within three years of funding being made available for the study.

Designated by Secretarial Order in 1938, Salem Maritime National Historic Site was the first designated national historic site. The park preserves and interprets America's and New England's maritime history and the important role that Salem played in the development of international maritime trade from the late 17th century through the 19th century. While the park was originally limited to interpreting the theme of maritime trade through the early 19th century, subsequent legislation broadened the park's focus to include the domestic life of colonial Salem, and immigration and industrial history of the city in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Currently, the park is an 8.93-acre historic district containing ten historic buildings, nine archeological sites, four historic wharfs, and a historic light station, dating between 1675 and 1944. The *Friendship of Salem*, a replica late-18th century tall ship owned and operated by the National Park Service, reflects Salem's economic heyday from the 1790s through the 1830s. The diverse historic resources and replica tall ship provide living classrooms within which visitors can consider the ways that tall ships and the rise of global maritime trade networks in New England contributed to the American Revolution and helped shape modern socioeconomic and political development in the United States.

The park is also responsible for managing and operating the Salem Regional Visitor Center in downtown Salem at the Salem Armory in which the National Park Service has an ownership interest. The Salem Regional Visitor Center serves as the primary Salem Maritime National Historic Site visitor center, provides community spaces to explore the park unit's interpretive themes in modern contexts, and supports the Essex National Heritage Area. The park is a key site and gateway to the national heritage area.

The Department believes that the redesignation of Salem Maritime National Historic Site as a national historical park, as provided by H.R. 1647, is appropriate. Generally, National Park System units designated as "national historical parks" have a greater diversity of historical resources and interpretive themes than those designated as "historic sites" and may be spread out over non-contiguous lands. As is reflected in its long history, Salem Maritime National Historic Site has expanded in the scope of its resources and its interpretation. The deeper and broader experience it now offers to visitors supports the basis for redesignation of this park as a national historical park.

The Department also believes that the boundary study provided by H.R. 1647 could be very beneficial. The study would be useful in identifying important

maritime and coastal defense-related resources in the vicinity of Salem that should be preserved and protected to enhance our understanding of the significant contributions of this area to our nation's history.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer questions that you or other members of the Committee might have.

H.R. 6852, to designate Holcombe Rucker Park, in Harlem, New York, as a National Commemorative Site, and for other purposes

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 6852, to designate Holcombe Rucker Park, in Harlem, New York, as a National Commemorative Site, and for other purposes.

The Department supports bringing greater recognition to the achievements and legacy of Holcombe Rucker, but we have concerns about the use of the "national commemorative site." We would be happy to discuss alternative ways to commemorate Holcombe Rucker, the person, and the Holcombe Rucker Park, the site.

H.R. 6852 would designate Holcombe Rucker Park in New York City, New York as a National Commemorative Site. The bill specifies that the site would not be a unit of the National Park System. There are no provisions in the bill that would provide any relationship to the National Park Service for the site, such as authority to provide financial or technical assistance.

Holcombe Rucker Park is a playground owned and operated by New York City Parks in the Harlem neighborhood of the New York City borough of Manhattan. In 1974, the park was renamed in honor of Holcombe Rucker, the Playground Director for a number of sites across Harlem from 1948 to 1964. The park's outdoor basketball court has become well known as a venue for a creative and competitive form of basketball referred to as streetball and has been the subject of three films about the sport: *Above the Rim*, *On Hallowed Ground*, and *The Real: Rucker Pro Legends and Fathers of the Sport*.

Holcombe Rucker Park was among the sites inventoried in the National Park Service's 2023 African American Outdoor Recreation National Historic Landmark Theme Study. The study highlighted Holcombe Rucker as an educator and a playground director who believed that education and supervised recreation could help troubled Black youth in urban neighborhoods. In the 1940s, Rucker started a small outdoor basketball tournament for Black youth. Despite limited support from the city park management, Rucker's summer tournaments grew in popularity and, by 1965, the tournaments were relocated to the more suitable facility that would eventually bear his name—Holcombe Rucker Park.

Holcombe Rucker Park would eventually become a magnet for the city's most talented young basketball players, and it played host to pickup games and tournaments where future professional basketball stars such as Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Nate Archibald, Wilt Chamberlain, Julius Erving and other streetball legends honed their craft. Rucker's philosophy of education and supervised recreation, put into practice through his successful outdoor basketball tournaments, contributed in the 1960s to the city's efforts to construct other recreational facilities in several predominantly Black neighborhoods.

Designating Holcombe Rucker Park as a National Commemorative Site could create confusion among the general public about the significance of the title and the site's relationship to the National Park Service. The term "National Commemorative Site" has no definition by law or custom. The National Park Service is aware of two examples where Congress has used this designation: for the Quindaro Townsite National Commemorative Site in Kansas, and the Charleston High School National Commemorative Site in Arkansas. In both instances, designation has included a role for the National Park Service, either as a provider of financial and technical assistance, or as a provider of a commemorative monument and interpretive exhibit. Designating Holcombe Rucker Park as a National Commemorative Site, without any provisions tying it to the National Park Service, would bring further uncertainty regarding the significance of this designation.

Rather than moving forward with H.R. 6852, the Department would encourage the proponents of providing greater recognition for Holcombe Rucker Park to explore alternative ways to honor and interpret the site's history and the contributions of Holcombe Rucker to outdoor recreation in urban America. The Department would be pleased to work with the sponsor and their constituents to explore other options.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer questions that you or other members of the Committee might have.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO MR. MICHAEL REYNOLDS, DEPUTY
DIRECTOR, CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Mr. Reynolds did not submit responses to the Committee by the appropriate deadline for inclusion in the printed record.

Questions Submitted by Representative Westerman

Question 1. During your testimony, you mentioned that the Department is focusing on ways to “quicken” the appraisal process in land exchanges.

1a) Can you expand on the negative impacts delays in the appraisal process have on the Department and individual bureaus such as BLM and NPS?

1b) How long does the average appraisal process take for an administrative land exchange, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

1c) How long does the average appraisal process take for a Congressionally mandated land exchange, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

1d) How long does the average appraisal process take for an administrative land conveyance, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

1e) How long does the average appraisal process take for a Congressionally mandated land conveyance, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

1f) Has the Department identified any mechanisms that can be implemented that would reduce the appraisal backlog?

1g) Has the National Park Service identified any mechanisms that can be implemented that would reduce the appraisal backlog?

1h) Has the Bureau of Land Management identified any mechanisms that can be implemented that would reduce the appraisal backlog?

1i) What is the current backlog of appraisals that need to take place, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

1j) Which state(s) have the highest numbers of pending DOI appraisals and what are the specific reasons in these state(s) for such a backlog?

Question 2. What is the average amount of time it takes to complete an administrative land exchange, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

Question 3. What is the average amount of time it takes to complete a Congressionally mandated land exchange, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

Question 4. What is the average amount of time it takes to complete an administrative land conveyance, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

Question 5. What is the average amount of time it takes to complete a Congressionally mandated land conveyance, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

Question 6. What is the average amount of time it takes to complete the environmental review process for typical land exchanges, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

Question 7. What is the average amount of time it takes to complete the environmental review process for typical land conveyance, both Department-wide and by individual bureau?

Question 8. How many DOI lands available for disposal have been conveyed out of federal ownership in the last 5 years?

Question 9. How many DOI lands available for disposal have been conveyed out of federal ownership since 2021?

Question 10. DOI recently announced it will spend \$195 million dollars on “climate restoration and resilience projects” in national parks over the next 10 years. As part of the announcement, NPS provided a project list on its website that describes each project title, cost, and the park(s) where the project will take place. However, there are seven projects listed totaling \$10,423,826 that provide the project title and cost but list the park(s) as “TBD”.

10a) What factors did the agency consider when deciding how to allocate this funding?

10b) Why is the Department unable to provide the names of the 10 parks in which over \$10 million dollars of taxpayer funding are being spent?

10c) For each of these seven projects that are listed as “TBD”, please provide a breakdown of which parks will receive this funding.

10d) How can the NPS know the cost and subject of a project if it does not know the location in which it will be implemented?

10e) Will the project list be updated when the agency determines where these seven projects will take place?

10f) Please describe how the NPS calculates estimated costs for climate resilience programs and provide examples.

Question 11. Please provide an update on the implementation of the Japanese American World War II History Network Act (section 645 of Division DD of Public Law 117-328).

11a) Has the Department reviewed studies and reports to complement Japanese American World War II history and Japanese American experiences during World War II, including studies related to relocation centers and confinement sites?

11b) Has the Department produced and disseminated any appropriate educational materials, such as handbooks, maps, interpretive guides, or electronic information relating to Japanese American World War II history and Japanese American experiences during the war, including relocation centers and confinement sites, since this law’s enactment?

11c) Has the Department entered into any cooperative agreements or memoranda of understanding to provide technical assistance under this law? If yes, please provide a list of each one.

11d) Has the Department adopted an official, uniform symbol or device for the Network?

11e) Have regulations been issued regarding the use of this symbol or device?

11f) Does the Network have a website?

11g) When does the Department anticipate this law will be fully implemented?

Question 12. What is the current backlog of special resource studies at NPS?

Question 13. When does NPS anticipate the backlog of special resource studies will be completed?

Question 14. How much does the average special resource study cost?

Question 15. How long does it take to complete the average special resource study?

Question 16. Would DOI support conducting a special resource study on designating Plum Island in New York as a national monument?

Question 17. How long would a special resource study on designating Plum Island as a national monument take?

Question 18. Has NPS ever managed a former Department of Homeland Security facility, as in the case of Plum Island? Are there any special considerations regarding DOI managing former DHS facilities?

Question 19. In NPS’s testimony on H.R. 1584, the agency references a letter sent during the EA process to the EPA. Please provide a copy of this letter.

Question 20. Can NPS please elaborate on the estimated cost the agency would incur if the agency would take over administrative jurisdiction and management of Plum Island?

Question 21. How many national historic sites have been redesignated as national historical parks? Please provide a list of each example.

Question 22. If NPS does not support a commemorative site designation for Rucker Park, what designation would the agency support?

Question 23. Would NPS support placing an interpretive exhibit at Rucker Park?

Question 24. In March 2021, NPS began construction on a “Wall of Remembrance” containing the names of soldiers who gave their lives in the Korean War in addition to completing an overall rehabilitation of the Korean War Veterans Memorial. The project was completed on July 27, 2022, at a cost of \$22 million in donated funds

from the people of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea. Just months after the new site opened, it was revealed that several hundred of the American service members' names were misspelled or missing. It is estimated that the Wall of Remembrance contains 1,015 spelling errors and incorrectly includes the names of 245 service members who died in circumstances totally unrelated to the war.

Can you please provide an update on NPS's work with DOD to correct errors on the Wall? Please include a timeline and estimated cost for correcting any errors as part of this response.

Mr. TIFFANY. OK, thank you very much, Director Reynolds, and I am going to recognize Members for 5 minutes for questioning. I am going to start out with the questioning.

Mr. SMITH. Representative Amodei's bill withdraws about 300,000 acres managed by the Forest Service in the Ruby Mountains from oil and gas development. Are you aware of any oil and gas development on that parcel currently?

Mr. SMITH. Currently, there are no oil and gas activities, and the geology suggests that it is low-impact, in terms of any kind of oil and gas activities to be gained from that. But currently there are no activities on that parcel.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Smith, if they say it is low-impact, does that mean that there is little chance that there would be any oil and gas development?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, that is the information that we get from the geologist.

Mr. TIFFANY. So, why would the withdrawal be necessary if it is low-impact?

First of all, it is not happening now, and there is a low probability that this would happen. Why is it necessary to have to do that? Why couldn't we have the proposal that is being suggested by Representative Amodei without this being included?

Mr. SMITH. A lot of concern was generated by the locals in Nevada that they wanted to see it continually protected, so that is how that came about. And that is why we considered withdrawing it.

Mr. TIFFANY. OK. Have you heard from Nevadans that have said, no, this really isn't necessary?

Mr. SMITH. I have not. I can certainly look into that.

Mr. TIFFANY. In regards to the 150,000 acres of Federal lands being designated as wilderness, is it really necessary for this project to add more wilderness?

So, for our edification, wilderness is one of the most restrictive designations. Is that correct? And could you talk about that a little bit, Mr. Smith?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, there are restrictions, particularly when it comes to non-motorized activities, but there are lots of exceptions, and for good reasons, that we allow particularly oil and gas leasing. If they are valid and existing rights, those rights can still be utilized. You can still have oil and gas activity within those.

Also, there are exceptions for safety, fire concerns. So, there are exceptions for good reasons that we allow activities in the wilderness.

Mr. TIFFANY. And more broadly speaking, have those exceptions been readily utilized as we have seen more fire in the western states?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, we have certainly considered a lot of those activities in our wildlife crisis strategy.

Mr. TIFFANY. The Department has been proactive?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, they have been very proactive in our 10-year strategy.

Mr. TIFFANY. Director Reynolds, in regards to the Plum Island proposal as a national monument, given the unique attributes of Plum Island and the discontinued operations of the Animal Disease Center, does the Department believe it would be feasible to manage Plum Island as a national monument?

Mr. REYNOLDS. I think we have a number of questions, as I mentioned in my testimony, Mr. Chairman, about making the island safe for visitor use. And there are just a lot of concerns that the Department would still like to work with everybody involved in this complex place to move forward on. But we do support the idea that this island is a very special place.

Mr. TIFFANY. My understanding is there has not been a study done with the Department's support, a special resource study to determine the appropriate designation.

Mr. REYNOLDS. We can come back and confirm that. I believe we would be welcoming any kind of thing to help clarify these issues.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you. That is going to conclude my questions, and I am going to yield back. I will turn to the Ranking Member for his opportunity for 5 minutes to ask questions of our witnesses.

Mr. Neguse.

Mr. NEGUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you again to both of our witnesses for your testimony and for your service at your respective agencies.

One kind of top-line observation I guess I would make, and then I have some technical questions regarding Mr. LaLota's bill and Mr. Espailat's bill. The top-line observation, this is more, I suppose, directed towards my good friend and colleague, and the Chairman of our Committee, is that I think this is a great opportunity for us to debate some bills that deserve an open hearing and deserve some candid, back-and-forth conversation with respect to bills that propose a variety of withdrawals, mineral withdrawals, oil and gas development withdrawals, as well as some conveyances of various different parcels in our respective regions and states.

And I would hope that this Subcommittee could consider more bills of this nature. Irrespective of whether or not they ultimately make it across the finish line to a markup and to the Floor, we have a long list of bills from our side of the aisle, Democratic colleagues, who would like to have their bills considered in this same vein. This, I believe, is the first Subcommittee hearing that we have had considering bills of this nature.

So, I would just encourage both the Chairman of the Subcommittee and the Chairman of the Full Committee that I don't know that we should be afraid of the debate, and we should be able to have an open process and be able to consider similar bills, for example, similar to Mr. Amodei's bill, which obviously, there are folks on different sides of the equation in terms of how

they feel about it, but we have an opportunity to actually get into the weeds on it, and Mr. Amodei has the opportunity to make his case. So, I would just encourage the Chairman of the Subcommittee and Chairman of the Full Committee to respectfully consider that request for the duration of 118th Congress.

With respect to the bills that we are considering today, Mr. Reynolds, in terms of the bill to protect Rucker Park, or rather, to recognize it as a commemorative place, I guess I respectfully disagree with the NPS's observations that you all have provided in your written testimony and that you have mentioned.

And the second page of your written testimony says, and I will quote this, "We share the bill's sponsor's commitment to the preservation"—oh, excuse me, that is Plum Island.

With respect to this particular bill designating Holcombe Rucker Park, you make the observation, with respect to two other bills that are of a similar nature to this bill that we are considering, that in both of those instances designations included a role for the NPS, either as a provider of financial and technical assistance or as a provider of a commemorative monument and interpretive exhibit.

So, I guess what I am suggesting to you is, it seems like a simple amendment to Mr. Espaillat's bill that provides for the NPS to play a technical assistance role or provides for the NPS to provide an interpretive exhibit would solve your concerns.

And I understand the NPS's historical opposition, just as a general matter, to commemorative designations. But at the end of the day, to the extent that Congress works its will and decides on a bipartisan basis that this is worth doing, I would presume that a technical amendment of that sort would address and allay your concerns.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Yes, Mr. Ranking Member, thank you for all that.

I think, bottom line, in plain English, we think this story deserves recognition. It is a fabulous history. And I think our technical concerns are more about the national commemorative site designation, and I think there are lots of different choices, to your point, that we can help work with either the sponsor or the Committee to make this work out.

Mr. NEGUSE. Thank you. Well, I appreciate that, Mr. Reynolds, and I would certainly welcome that. And I know Mr. Espaillat, I am sure will, as well. Let's find a way to get a technical amendment on there so we can get this bill across the finish line.

Secondly, and finally, I am running out of time, but with respect to Mr. LaLota's bill regarding Plum Island, I suppose it is less a question than a statement. I would suggest that while I understand the NPS has a variety of concerns, and clearly, the island has a complicated history, again, just with respect to the remediation and other costs that are outlined in your testimony, to the extent that the Congress is working its will and decides that this is an island that merits this type of protection, and I have historically been very supportive of these types of designations, I would just encourage you to work with the bill's sponsor so that we can find a way to get this bill to a markup, because I have never been to Plum Island, but from what I have gleaned from reading about

it and hearing about it, it sounds like a place that we ought to be protecting.

With that, I can see the balance of my time has expired.

Mr. REYNOLDS. Thank you, and I will take that back, sir.

Mr. NEGUSE. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. The Ranking Member yields. Now, I would like to turn to the gentleman from Oregon, Mr. Bentz, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you, Mr., not speaker, Chair.

And I think, Mr. Smith, I am going to ask you questions about the Nevada bill, because it is of great interest to me in Oregon, where we have been working on a somewhat similar piece of legislation for several years. And I have always been interested in whatever the rationale might be when it comes to these pieces of Federal land that are going to be given to these small cities or even larger cities, as compared to the total amount of Federal land, in this case, Nevada. Of course, the total amount of federally controlled land in Nevada is 56 million acres, and we are talking about a fraction of that number here.

But you indicate, and I wasn't paying close enough attention, that the Department has concerns about Titles I, II, and V, which I am staring at. So, I am just curious. What are those concerns that would rise to a level that would say we have to be worried about what amounts to something less than 30,000 acres, when the Federal Government has 56 million acres?

Mr. SMITH. I think the concerns that we have cited in our written testimony as well as the oral testimony is that we are concerned with things like time frames, for example, there are titles in there for 180 days. It is very difficult to get that done within 100 days, in 6 months when you are talking about public involvement, when you are talking about NEPA, when you are talking about evaluation. So, it is just technical things that we have concerns about.

Mr. BENTZ. It is not an objection to the merits, then, this is just a procedural concern that you have.

Mr. SMITH. Correct.

Mr. BENTZ. Is that true as to all three of those Sections 1, 2, and 3, it is just procedural?

Mr. SMITH. Yes. We would like to work with the Committee to get those changes.

Mr. BENTZ. You also mentioned in a previous exchange regarding the nature of wilderness restrictions—the Chair asked what those restrictions on wilderness are. This is of great interest to me, because if you look at different wildernesses that have been established there is different protected access, for example.

Do you anticipate any challenges when it comes to access to this wilderness that has been created in this particular bill?

Mr. SMITH. That is something we want to work with the Committee on to make sure that there is access in there, and also to protect the values of wilderness. So, those are just some technical things that have been raised by the locals that we need to work out. I don't have specifics on that, but we certainly stand ready to work with the Chairman and the bill's sponsor to do whatever we need to do.

Mr. BENTZ. I think the concern to me, looking back into Oregon, where we have the similar situation, the amount of land we are dealing with there are around 1 million acres that is a combination of wilderness study area and then land with wilderness characteristics. But all this area, it is a huge area, so to lock it up and not allow folks to use existing roads to access for, let's say, fire suppression purposes or cultural purposes, is not a good idea.

So, I am just really asking you, do you, as a Department, take a position on access and trying to restrict it?

Or if a road fails by washing out or something, do you allow motorized vehicles to go in and repair it?

This is of great concern in Oregon. I am sure it is a concern in Nevada also. What is your Department's position on access when it comes to, first of all, motorized for the purposes I just mentioned, cultural, for example, and then repairing those roads, the existing ones, of course?

Mr. SMITH. Typically, before we designate that we have a wilderness study. There is a lot of public comment involvement, and we take all that into consideration, so I don't know specifics on that.

But at the end of the day, all wilderness is designated by Congress. So, that has been a thorough vetting before we declare anything wilderness. And we certainly, like I said, when you are talking about fire, when you are talking about safety, when you talk about oil and gas activities, a lot of that is allowed in wilderness where they are validating existing rights.

Mr. BENTZ. Right. So, there was a little point of clarification I would like on that, access for mining or gas or whatnot. If you declare the wilderness, isn't the only thing that is preserved those claims that already exist?

Mr. SMITH. That is correct.

Mr. BENTZ. So, any new activity is barred.

Mr. SMITH. That is correct, once it has been designated wilderness.

Mr. BENTZ. Right. So, in your answer to the Chairman earlier, the qualification should have been, I think you actually made it, if those claims exist, if those filings have occurred, then those are protected, but anything new is barred.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, with the exceptions of, if you have an emergency situation for safety or wildfire, there are exceptions, but it depends on the situation.

Mr. BENTZ. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I would like to recognize Mr. Espallat for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Chairman. Regarding H.R. 6852, I would like to propose that the Harlem Rucker Park educational aspect is one that fits perfectly through a cooperative agreement with the public and private entities for educational purposes. And I am sure that you will hear in the testimonies of our folks here today the wonderful job that they have done with regards to scholarships and other educational opportunities. So, I am sure that there is room for a cooperative agreement through an amendment as we move forward.

Mr. Chairman, I ask for a favorable vote of yes.

I yield.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes, sir. The gentleman yields, and next we will turn to the Chairman of the Full Committee, Mr. Westerman, for questions.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany, and thank you to everyone who presented their bills and the witnesses today. Mr. Bentz raised an issue that I would just like to get some input from both Mr. Smith and Mr. Reynolds.

I had one of these land transfer bills several years ago that we had a hearing on and marked it up. It passed the House, passed the Senate, got signed into law. It was a massive land transfer. It was 3 acres that a church sat on in my district that had a cemetery that had gravestones in it that pre-dated the Forest Service. And they were trading 6 acres of private land for the 3 acres, and it took almost 2 years to do it.

Mr. Smith, you were talking about the time crunch. I could see where it might get a little more complicated with a big land transfer like Mr. Amodei's bill, but why does it take so long, and what could we do to increase the timing?

And I took the Chief of the Forest Service there, and took the Deputy Under Secretary of the Interior there. With both of them pushing, it was like within a week of the 2-year deadline that Congress set to make this land transfer happen. Why does it take so long?

And I never got a cost from it, but I know the Department's Forest Service and Interior probably spent three or four times more money than the value of the land going through the transfer process. So, is there something we could do to help you all make those land transfers happen much more quickly and much more efficiently?

Mr. SMITH. I think we are aware of that we have administrative responsibilities already and authorities to do that.

Typically, when you are dealing with that, you are dealing with the proponent and the agency, and a lot of times it is title issues. A lot of times it is environmental assessments that we have to do. There are a lot of administrative laws that are not waived when we get the legislative land exchanges, or cemeteries, or whatever. So, we have to work through the administrative process that we have.

And yes, a lot of times, unfortunately, it could take that long. But typically, it is something that the proponents don't have, something that we don't have. So, there is a bunch of back and forth until we get it there. But we just follow the process.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Do you have any recommendations on how to make the process better? Because that process was not good.

Mr. SMITH. I would certainly like to work with the Committee to figure that out. Off the top of my head, I can't suggest any specific changes right now.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Reynolds? Because it was Forest Service and BLM that were involved in it.

Mr. REYNOLDS. We also have a lot of land exchanging and transfer processes. And as Mr. Smith indicates, we would be happy to sit down to try to keep improving these processes.

A lot of times it is also appraisal length of time that we are very focused on at the Department of the Interior right around how to quicken those things, I guess I could say. So, we share your concern.

Mr. WESTERMAN. All right, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I would now like to recognize Mr. Amodei from Nevada for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Smith, you said you are opposed to Sections 1, 2, and 5. One is the Douglas County Economic Conservation Act. It says Douglas County gets 7,700 acres for flood control and management, 188 acres for flood protection. Do you know if either one of those conveyances come from Forest Service land or BLM? Are you aware of, because it is not all Forest Service.

Mr. SMITH. Right.

Mr. AMODEI. And it is not all BLM.

Do either one of those two ring a bell for impact on Forest Service, if you know?

Mr. SMITH. I don't know that.

Mr. AMODEI. OK.

Mr. SMITH. I would have to check that.

Mr. AMODEI. Fair enough.

Now, it also says there are 1,084 acres to Douglas County to be used for open space. Do you know if that is BLM inventory or Forest Service inventory?

Mr. SMITH. I would have to look. I don't have the information.

Mr. AMODEI. OK. And then, finally, there is a designation of land that goes to the Washoe Tribe, which is the Indigenous people in the Tahoe Basin, which I assume is from yours. Are you opposed, as the Forest Service, to a conveyance of land to the Washoe Tribe in Douglas County, based on ancestral claims? Is the Forest Service opposed to that land being transferred to the Washoe Tribe?

Mr. SMITH. No, I think what I have said earlier in my testimony is that there are just a lot of technical things that we have concerns with, we don't support the bill as is written.

Mr. AMODEI. OK, great. I appreciate that.

No. 2, you are opposed to because it is 14 acres of old Santini-Burton purchases in the Tahoe Basin that the Forest Service holds in the middle of Incline Village. Are we opposed just philosophically? Because it is supposed to be transferred to the General Improvement District, which is kind of like the municipal organization there, for use as, according to the bill, for public uses, not private development, not building more hard surfaces in the Tahoe Basin. Is the Forest Service opposed to that general proposition?

Mr. SMITH. We are opposed in the sense that we think they are sensitive lands on the Santini-Burton, and we think we are better capable of managing those.

Mr. AMODEI. Completely surrounded, not stream environment zone, just as a general thing, if we got it and it is in Tahoe in this instance, you have nothing more specific to offer?

Mr. SMITH. Nothing more. But certainly, again, we would like to work with you.

Mr. AMODEI. OK, and I would, too, thank you.

The last one is the section which conveys half an acre in the Carson Ranger District Office that is presently between the district office and a Shell station, so they can put a street through there. And there was a vague reference to, well, it is going to disrupt our operations of the Carson Ranger District. Anything more specific than that?

Mr. SMITH. Nothing more specific than that.

Mr. AMODEI. OK. Thank you, sir.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Crane, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRANE. I have no questions at this time. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Amodei, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, sir. I just have one other thing, which is a question I will ask myself that came up in some of the earlier conversation, and that is about the piece in the Ruby Mountains in Elko. And the question I am going to ask myself so you can get it on the record is, why did you put this in your bill?

It is Forest Service land, and it is, well, there is nothing there and I will tell you the reason why it is in the bill. Because, as it sits now, anybody can apply under the applicable regs for oil and gas exploration.

And there was a question asked, Mr. Chair, that indicated, hey, a lot of locals are griping about this. Let me tell you what the locals did. And by the way, for political scorekeepers, it is one of the ruby-reddest counties in Nevada. I think I can say that since I represent the area. They went nuts, saying, "Please get rid of NEPA and make the Forest Service tell them no." And some of us crazy people had to say, "Let the Forest Service go through NEPA and see where they decide. You know, maybe NEPA is fine." And guess what, Mr. Chairman? The Forest Service went through NEPA and said no.

But then you say, well, OK, so what is the harm, what is the foul? I will tell you what the harm, what the foul is. It takes a lot for that ranger district to process those things, go through the whole NEPA process, blah, blah, blah. They ended up denying them and there is low probability of success. So, to come back and say, which the locals support, or it wouldn't be in there, to come back and say you can't do oil and gas exploration stuff in the Ruby Mountains, all other multiple uses are fine, nobody is transferring any property, or anything else like that. But I can tell you that the Ruby Mountains occupy a spot in the hearts and minds of Nevadans, and especially those in northeastern Nevada, where they quite simply don't want to have to be under the threat of anybody who has a stamp or an e-mail address or whatever to go, here we go, we are applying for these just because they are available.

There is a speculation game that goes on where it is like, if they are a buck an acre or whatever, what the heck? If we get them, if something happens, fine. Not a good policy for that particular area. That is why that 400,000-acre piece or 300,000-acre piece is in the bill for your record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The Chair recognizes Mr. LaLota for 5 minutes.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you, Chairman.

For a little more than a decade back at home, I have been involved in Suffolk County government and politics. I have been to scores of community meetings. I have been in Congress for about a year. And it has been my experience that unified, bipartisan, and community support on big ideas and big projects is really hard to come by. But that is not the case when it comes to preserving Plum Island.

In fact, my district is totally united in its support for preserving Plum Island. It is among the most frequent topics that my East End constituents raise with me, and I have yet to meet a single person who is opposed to designating Plum Island as a national monument.

Here, looking at Congress, I appreciate the signaling that the Ranking Member from the other side of the aisle gave towards his support. It feels good here, too, that a lot of folks are rowing in the same direction to help preserve Plum Island.

Back at home, in fact, many community groups are indeed united in their support. In fact, I have with me a letter of support for the Plum Island National Monument Act signed by the Steering Committee of the Plum Island Coalition, which is a group of over 125 member organizations. And those organizations include local, state, and national organizations.

And Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to submit this letter of support from the Preserve Plum Island Coalition to the record. It is dated March 5, 2024.

Mr. TIFFANY. So ordered.

[The information follows:]

**Preserve Plum Island Coalition
New Haven, CT**

March 5, 2024

Hon. Tom Tiffany, Chairman
Hon. John Curtis, Vice Chairman
Hon. Joe Neguse, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
Federal Lands Subcommittee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 1584, Plum Island National Monument Act

Dear Chairman Tiffany, Vice Chairman Curtis, and Ranking Member Neguse:

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition (PPIC) is comprised of more than 120 national, regional, and local organizations, whose collective membership totals several million members, united by the goal of permanently preserving Plum Island, New York. Members support the PPIC mission, which is to secure the permanent protection of the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources of Plum Island. Plum Island is a federally owned gem, boasting 24 ecological communities and high biodiversity, including 229 species of birds. It offers opportunities to educate the public about American history, the cultural heritage, and nature. It lies at the confluence of two National Esuaries—Long Island Sound and the Peconic Estuary.

The PPIC advocates for comprehensive conservation and management solutions that safeguard this national treasure in the public trust as a national monument, wildlife refuge, preserve, or other equivalent protection, with carefully managed and equitable public access, in perpetuity.

As members of the Steering Committee of the PPIC, we write to express to you our strong support for the passage of H.R. 1584, the “Plum Island National Monument Act” sponsored by Representative Nicholas LaLota (1st Congressional District-NY), designating Plum Island a national monument for the purpose of ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage. Specifically, this important legislation will ensure the permanent protection of the highly significant ecological, historical, and cultural resources found on Plum Island, through its dedication as a national monument under the management of the Department of Interior.

To this end, we are most appreciative of your consideration of H.R. 1584, through the hearing of the Federal Lands Subcommittee designed to receive input on this legislative initiative. We thank Representative LaLota for his introduction of the bill and thank the bill’s co-sponsors: Representatives Courtney, Garbarino, Himes, D’Esposito, and Lawler. We strongly support its adoption, designating Plum Island a national monument *for the purpose of ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage.*

Achieving Plum Island’s permanent protection is a goal supported by elected officials at all levels of government. In addition to federal support, many Long Island members of the New York State Senate and Assembly, the entire 18-member Suffolk County Legislature, and the Supervisor and other members of the Southold Town Board (within whose town Plum Island is situated), have strongly supported the permanent protection of this nationally significant, federally owned asset. Widespread support for preserving Plum Island can be seen in a compilation of letters from elected officials, organizations, and citizens, along with editorials, articles, and media productions, in a volume we posted to www.preserveplumisland.org/campaign-support last fall.

We hope to work with your Subcommittee and Representative LaLota’s office in achieving this outcome. Please consider the PPIC to be a resource to you and your staff if you have any questions concerning the resources of Plum Island, past and current efforts to protect it, and discussions various PPIC members have had with governmental agencies and stakeholders regarding the same.

Sincerely,

JOHN TURNER,
Spokesperson

Members of the PPIC Steering Committee:

John Turner,
Spokesperson

Robert LaFrance,
Audubon Connecticut

Louise Harrison,
Save the Sound

Nicole Layman,
The Wilderness Society

Leah Lopez Schmalz,
Save the Sound

Mark Levine,
Orient Association

Denise Stranko,
Save the Sound

Marian Lindberg,
The Nature Conservancy in New York

Drianne Benner,
Orient Association

Vanessa Lockel,
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

Gordon Bliss,
Coast Defense Study Group

Erin McGrath,
Audubon New York

Sandi Brewster-Walker,
Montaukett Indian Nation

Anne Murray,
North Fork Environmental Council

Yvette DeBow-Salsedo,
Peconic Land Trust

Francis O’Shea,
Trust for Public Land

Robert DeLuca,
Group for the East End

Casey Petrashek,
New York League of Conservation Voters

Adrienne Esposito,
Citizens Campaign for the
Environment

Jane Fasullo,
Sierra Club Long Island Group

Gregory Jacob,
The Nature Conservancy in New
York

David Reisfield,
Friends of Plum Island

Richard Remmer,
Friends of Plum Island and Parks &
Trails NY

Rebecca Rubin,
Nature First Consulting, LLC

Members of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition

American Birding Association	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County	The Ink Spot Southold
American Bird Conservancy	Defend H2O	InnerSpace Scientific Diving
American Littoral Society, Northeast Chapter	East End Apiaries	Island Outreach Foundation
Andrew Sabin Family Foundation	East End Lighthouses	Long Island Audubon Council
Archipelago New York	East End Seaport Museum & Marine Foundation	Eastern Long Island Audubon
Asharoken Garden Club	Eastern Long Island Chapter of Surfrider Foundation	Great South Bay Audubon
Audubon Connecticut	East Hampton Town Natural Resources Department	Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon
Audubon New York	East Marion Community Association	Four Harbors Audubon
The Captain's Table Charters	Endangered Species Coalition	North Shore Audubon
Central New York Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology	Environment East - Peconic	North Fork Audubon
Citizen's Campaign for the Environment	Environmental Defense Fund	South Shore Audubon
Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor	Finker Wellness, Inc.	Long Island Botanical Society
Coast Defense Study Group	Fishers Island Conservancy	Long Island Environmental Voters Forum
Coastal Research and Education Society of L.I.	Fishers Island Oyster Farm	Long Island Forest Walks
Coastal Steward Long Island	Footprints In The Water, LLC	Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference
Concerned Citizens of Montauk	Foundation for Ecological Research in the Northeast	Long Island Greenways and Healthy Trails
The Connecticut Audubon Society	Friends of Plum Island	Long Island Indigenous People Museum & Research Institute
Connecticut - Rhode Island Coastal Fly Fishers	The Garden Club of East Hampton	Long Island Nature Organization
Connecticut Land Conservation Council	Gourmet Foods International	Long Island Paddlers
Connecticut Ornithological Association	Group for the East End	Long Island Pine Barrens Society
Conservation & Natural Areas Planning	Great Gull Island Project	Long Island Soundkeeper
	Henry L. Ferguson Museum - Fishers Island	Mattabesek Audubon Society
	Huntington Lighthouse Preservation Society	Mattituck-Laurel Civic Association
		Menunkatuck Audubon Society

Montaukett Indian Nation	Potapaug Audubon Society	The Trust for Public Land
Mystic Aquarium	Randall T. Parsons AICP	Third House Nature Center
Narrow River LLC	Peconic Baykeeper	Three Village Community Trust
Nassau Hiking and Outdoor Club	Peconic Land Trust	Treiber Farms
The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut	Preservation Long Island	Trimble's of Corchaug Nursery
The Nature Conservancy in New York	Quality Parks	United States Lighthouse Society
The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island	Queens County Bird Club	WATERWASH Projects
New London Maritime Society	Quogue Wildlife Refuge	Westbrook Land Conservation Trust
New York City Audubon	Regional Plan Association	Whaling Museum and Education Center of Cold Spring Harbor
New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV)	Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association	Wild Bird Crossing of Bridgehampton
New York Sailing Club	Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation	Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset
New York Section of the International Dark Sky Association	The Safina Center	Wildlife Conservation Societ
New York State Ornithological Association	Save the Bay - RI	
New York State Marine Education Association	Save Mattituck Inlet	
Northeast Sisters of Mercy/Associates, Bridgeport CT Coalition	Save the Sound	
North Fork Environmental Council	Seatuck Environmental Association	
North Shore Land Alliance	Setauket Harbor Task Force	
Norwalk River Watershed Association	Sierra Club - Connecticut Chapter	
Old Saybrook Land Trust	Sierra Club, Long Island Group	
Operation SPLASH	Sierra Club, New York City Group	
Orient Association	Southold Indian Museum	
Park & Trails New York	Southold Town Historic Preservation Commission	
	StoneRidge Conservation Committee	
	Suffolk County Legislator Steven Englebright	

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you.

Mr. Reynolds, how are you, sir? You are the Deputy Director of the National Park Service. Thanks so much for being here with us today. Can you briefly explain the process through which the National Park Service goes before the Park Service designates an area like Plum Island one of national importance? And does that include a specific study?

Mr. REYNOLDS. Thank you very much, Congressman, for that. And there are a lot of different ways, so I won't bore you with all the details.

But Congress, of course, can designate national park units at any time, as we are discussing today. And then, if and when we have proposals such as Plum Island, usually there is a special resource study. There are things also called recon studies, which are faster. And we try to figure out, basically, the values and the feasibility and the suitability of the site. So, that is a very short answer to your good question.

And usually these things come down to, are there nationally-significant resources? Are they suitable? Are they feasible to be able to be managed? Could someone else manage it? Questions like that.

Mr. LALOTA. Great. And can you go into a little bit of detail on the information you would need to prepare and publish a special resource study?

Mr. REYNOLDS. Yes. First, I just want to reiterate that we really support your efforts and all the efforts of the stakeholders, of which there are many, for the conservation values of Plum Island. We are there. There are just a ton of questions, and as you know better than anybody, a complex place. And that is why we want to just keep up the various conversations. We have been having a lot with the other Federal agencies on the island, as well as state and your local constituents. We just want to keep those going to figure these things out.

Mr. LALOTA. Yes.

Mr. REYNOLDS. But to answer your question, we would need to, I think there is a lot of study of the island, to be honest with you. They have done an awful lot for the environmental cleanup, and we would just need to make sure we have enough information to understand what those natural and cultural resources really are.

Mr. LALOTA. What can I tell my constituents, sir? I appreciate there needs to be a certain amount of bureaucracy that has to go into it. I totally understand, though there is overwhelming support, like I said, bipartisan, from the community, nearly unanimous, if not unanimous. I understand, still, with the Federal Government, we have to go through some sort of bureaucratic process. What can I tell my constituents as a timeline that it would take for you to do an appropriate study to help expedite this?

Mr. REYNOLDS. Yes, I wouldn't know how to answer that right now. But I would say that the quicker the timelines will increase, the more we stay together and keep talking with the existing agencies that are managing the island.

Mr. LALOTA. And with respect to those talks, would you accept any sort of studies or reports or what not done by agencies other than your own to help expedite the process?

Mr. REYNOLDS. Yes. I look forward to sharing some of those with you because I think it would help expedite the process. We have been at this for a while. Credit to my predecessor and his predecessor, many community groups who have been for this effort. We are eager to get this across the finish line, and consider us partners in anything that we need to do to get that done. So, we are very supportive, sir.

Mr. LALOTA. Awesome.

I yield, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now recognize the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Stauber, for 5 minutes.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany. I want to begin by thanking you for convening this hearing today, as well as my colleagues and bill sponsors who have put forth important pieces of legislation that seek to improve our public lands and best serve their respective constituents.

As I have shared with this Committee countless times, I am a firm believer in advancing policies that promote access to our public lands. Our public lands exist to serve the American people. When we approach public lands policy, the first question we need to ask is, how does this policy promote public access and public use?

Part of that includes ensuring that the right land managers are responsible for the right acreage. Sometimes it is best for certain acreage to be held and managed by our Federal land managers. Sometimes it is best to be held and managed by state, county, or local land managers, and sometimes it is best to be privately held to support our local economies. That brings us to H.R. 7332, the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act, put forth by Representative Maloy. In the case of this bill, it is in the best interest of Utahns for this acreage to be managed by the state of Utah and be part of their state park system.

Deputy Chief Smith, in your written testimony you outline some of the concerns the Forest Service has with this legislation. From my view, these concerns are really just technical and mainly process-driven. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Mr. STAUBER. If these concerns are addressed by the bill's sponsor, would the Forest Service commit to supporting passage of the legislation?

Mr. SMITH. I think, depending on what the changes are, we are certainly committed to working with the Committee. And if all things work out, I think, yes, the answer would be yes. But certainly, we need to look at the changes that are going to be suggested.

Mr. STAUBER. Of course. Thank you. I really hope you are able to address these concerns with Representative Maloy and commit to supporting the legislation, and it brings management of this acreage closer to the local level, and thus will lead to better productive use and enjoyment by all of the public.

Mr. Chair, I am going to yield the rest of my time to Representative Amodei.

Mr. TIFFANY. So ordered.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you to my colleague from Minnesota. And I just want to, subject to other questions from the Committee, it seems like in some of the questioning, anyhow, there is a failure to distinguish between, and I appreciate Mr. Smith being here, what affects the Bureau of Land Management in this bill, what affects the Forest Service in this bill, what is being designated as wilderness, and what is being removed from oil and gas exploration. They are not, as everybody on this Committee well knows, the same things.

So, while they all should be absolutely analyzed critically, they need to be analyzed in the context of are we creating wilderness in the Rubies or not? Are we doing stuff that affects Forest Service land for most of the Douglas County portion of the bill? No, other than the conveyance to the Washoe Tribe. So, I would just remind the Committee, for its analysis, that there are various lanes in this. It is a comprehensive bill that we are trying to be efficient with.

And by the way, the final thing is it didn't get in this bill unless it was consensus by the locals. So, when we talk about imposing our judgments on what is in here, which we are expected to do, I think the context of that is this is what the locals asked for. Not that they get carte blanche in that, but let's try to keep that in those lanes if we can.

I yield back the time. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to my colleague.

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Chair, I will reclaim my time and then yield to Representative Bentz for my remainder.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields to Mr. Bentz.

Mr. BENTZ. Thank you for the yield.

Mr. Smith, I am challenged by, again, the Department's position. I had asked earlier if there was something other than procedural objections to what is being suggested here for the state of Nevada. It sounded in one of your answers to a later question that indeed there was some basis for not wanting this to happen. Can you share that again?

If it is not procedural, but something on the merits, pick any one of these transfers and tell me why it should not happen.

Mr. SMITH. Most of those transfers we have concerns of whether we have access to the land that we currently have so that you still have a public access in there.

Other concerns would be access to public trails, concerns in terms of time frames. I have talked about sometimes the time frame is a little shorter. I think there is 180 days in there a couple of times, and we just don't think that is enough. In order to go through the public policy analysis, go through environmental, you go through appraisals, whatever, just the laws on the books that we have to do, we think that is a very short time frame for us to do it, and we would certainly need a longer time. So, those are the basic concerns in there.

Mr. BENTZ. Right. Yes, thank you. My time has expired, and thank you.

Mr. STAUBER. Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. Now, I would like to recognize Representative Maloy for 5 minutes.

Ms. MALOY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Smith, I had a whole list of questions here, and some of my colleagues have really covered it, but I just want to put a fine point on some of this.

You stated in your testimony that the Forest Service has concerns with the Fremont Indian State Park conveyance as described in the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act, including the prescribed time frames, which you just addressed, diligence, and future access by the Forest Service for road and trail easements, and procedures for resolving conflicts between the maps.

I just want to point out that the bill specifically addresses future access and existing rights, and making minor boundary adjustments to the maps. So, if the timeline is your only concern, or if we just need to reiterate the things that are specified in the bill, will you have your staff work with my staff and Senator Lee's team to address these so that we can have all these concerns hammered out and move this bill forward?

Mr. SMITH. We certainly look forward to working with you and the Committee on that. We would be happy to do so.

Ms. MALOY. OK, thank you. In an overall sense, I just want to reiterate, where does the U.S. Forest Service get its authority to manage land in the United States?

Mr. SMITH. Where the Forest Service gets—

Ms. MALOY. How was the Forest Service created?

Mr. SMITH. By the Organic Act.

Ms. MALOY. By Congress.

Mr. SMITH. Congress, right.

Ms. MALOY. And there is just a general feeling in here that Congress is overstepping somehow by telling the Forest Service what to do. And I just want to put a fine point on that before this hearing ends, that this is Congress working with the Forest Service on land management. This isn't an invasion of anybody's authority or ability to manage.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, I certainly don't think that is the feeling of the Department, nor certainly not the Forest Service.

Ms. MALOY. Thank you for clarifying that.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield the rest of my time.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentlelady yields, and that will conclude our questioning. If there are no further questions, we will now move on to our third panel. Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

While the Clerk resets our witness table, I will remind the witnesses that under Committee Rules, they must limit their oral statements to 5 minutes, but their entire statement will appear in the hearing record.

I would also like to remind our witnesses of the timing lights, which will turn red at the end of your 5-minute statement, and to please remember to turn on your microphone.

As with the second panel, I will allow all witnesses to testify before Member questioning.

I will now recognize Representative Crane to introduce our next witness, the Honorable Daryl Seymore, I hope I pronounce your name correctly, District IV Supervisor at the Navajo County Board of Supervisors.

Representative Crane, you may do your introduction.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to take a minute to welcome Mr. Daryl Seymore to the Committee today.

Mr. Seymore has served on the Navajo County Board of Supervisors since 2019, representing the communities of Pinedale, Show Low, and others. Supervisor Seymore previously served on the Show Low City Council for 16 years, including as Mayor for 8 years. He currently serves on the boards of several local and state organizations, including Northern Arizona Council of Governments, Regional Council, the Chairman of the Arizona Public Safety Retirement System, the Chairman of the Corrections Officer

Retirement Plan, and the National Association of Counties Transportation Steering Committee.

Mr. Seymore, it is clear from your resume that you enjoy serving your community and, in all the work you do, make life better for citizens of Navajo County. Thank you for traveling so far, and being able to talk to us today about the real-life impact of this cemetery expansion for the residents of Pinedale community. We really appreciate it, and admire your determination to get this legislation passed.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Seymore, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. DARYL SEYMORE, DISTRICT IV
SUPERVISOR, NAVAJO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
HOLBROOK, ARIZONA**

Mr. SEYMORE. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany. I am Daryl Seymore, Navajo County, for District IV. I am here to share information about the impacts of H.R. 3047, Apache County and Navajo County Conveyance Act of 2023, on unincorporated communities of Alpine and Pinedale, Arizona.

Navajo and Apache counties are in the northeastern part of Arizona, and are very rural, with each county having a population of less than 150,000 residents. These counties are steeped in tradition, and can trace their origins to two very distinct communities: Native Americans and early pioneers. Both groups still have thriving communities within Navajo and Apache Counties. As part of that history, many current residents can trace their family history back for generations, and take great pride in being able to live, work, and raise families, and eventually find their resting place in the same community.

Unfortunately, the cemeteries in Alpine and Pinedale have reached their current capacity. Families are now seeking burial locations in other communities for their loved ones who have passed. This causes undue stress and hardships on the residents of Alpine and Pinedale. Therefore, I am respectfully asking for your help in expediting a solution to this pressing issue.

The existing Alpine Cemetery is 2.56 acres, which is leased from the U.S. Forest Service and abuts the Apache National Forest. It is estimated that the cemetery would need to expand an additional 8.06 acres to accommodate current and future community burial needs, bringing the total cemetery size to 10.62 acres.

Apache County's Public Works Department has spent several years working with the Alpine District Rangers to identify possible options for the cemetery's expansion. After many attempts to acquire the expansion through the Town Site Act, it ultimately proved to be expensive, time-consuming, and burdensome. Alpine residents do not have any more time to find a solution, and the only funding available goes entirely towards maintaining the cemetery grounds.

Similarly, the existing Pinedale Cemetery in Navajo County is approximately 2½ acres, which is leased from the U.S. Forest Service and borders the Sitgreaves National Forest. It is estimated that the cemetery would need to expand an additional 2½ acres to accommodate current and future community burial needs, bringing the total cemetery size to 5 acres.

Like Apache County, Navajo County's Public Works Department has spent just over 2 years working with Joshua Miller, District Ranger for the Lakeside Ranger District, to identify possible options for the cemetery's expansion. After extensive conversation and hours of research, Mr. Miller learned that the only clear path forward for the U.S. Forest Service would be to sell the full 5 acres to Navajo County. Unfortunately, this option is not feasible due to time and cost constraints.

As we learned from the sale of the Woodland Lake Park in Pinetop-Lakeside, Arizona, the process to purchase land from the U.S. Forest Service can take years, which is time the Pinedale residents simply don't have. As a matter of fact, I spoke with the local cemetery board, and learned they are considering closing off road space to use for burial space.

In addition, we heard from the Forest Service the total acreage for this request is so small this project would not be expedited through the sale process.

This request comes as a partnership between Navajo County, Apache County, the communities of Pinedale, the community of Alpine, the Apache-Sitgreaves Forest. Given the urgency of this issue, all these partners are committed to working to find a solution. We are asking Congress' help to pass legislation authorizing a congressional land delineation of 5 acres within the Sitgreaves Forest for the existing and expanded Pinedale Cemetery, and 10.62 acres within the Apache Forest for the existing expanded Alpine Cemetery. Without your help, families in these communities will be forced to make the heartbreaking decision to bury their family somewhere other than their hometown.

Thank you for your time today, and I am available for questions.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Seymore follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DARYL SEYMORE, NAVAJO COUNTY SUPERVISOR
DISTRICT IV
ON H.R. 3047

Thank you, Chairman Tiffany and members of the sub-committee, for the opportunity to address you today. I'd also like to thank Representative Eli Crane for sponsoring this bill. My name is Daryl Seymore and I'm the Navajo County Supervisor for District 4 and I'm here to share information about the impacts of House Resolution 3047 Apache County and Navajo County Conveyance Act of 2023 on the unincorporated communities of Alpine and Pinedale Arizona.

Navajo and Apache Counties are in the northeastern part of Arizona and are very rural with each county having a population of less than 150,000 residents. These counties are steeped in tradition and can trace their origins to two very distinct communities: Native Americans and the early Pioneers. Both groups still have thriving communities within Navajo and Apache counties. As part of that history, many current residents can trace their family history back for generations and take great pride in being able to live, work, raise families, and eventually find their resting place in the same community. Unfortunately, the cemeteries in Alpine and Pinedale have reached their current capacity. Families are now seeking burial locations in other communities for their loved ones who have passed. This causes undue stress and hardships on the residents of Alpine and Pinedale. Therefore, I am respectfully asking your help to find an expedient solution to this pressing issue.

The existing Alpine cemetery is 2.56 acres, which is leased from the U.S. Forest Service and abuts the Apache National Forest. It is estimated that the cemetery would need to expand an additional 8.06 acres to accommodate current and future community burial needs bringing the total cemetery size to 10.62 acres.

Apache County's Public Works Department has spent several years working with the Alpine District Rangers to identify possible options for the cemetery's expansion.

After many attempts to acquire the expansion through the Townsite Act, it ultimately proved to be expensive, time consuming and burdensome. Alpine residents do not have any more time to find a solution and the only funding available goes entirely toward maintaining the cemetery grounds.

Similarly, the existing Pinedale cemetery in Navajo County is approximately two and a half acres, which is leased from the U.S. Forest Service and borders the Sitgreaves National Forest. It is estimated that the cemetery would need to expand an additional two and a half acres to accommodate current and future community burial needs bringing the total cemetery size to 5 acres.

Like Apache County, Navajo County's Public Works Department has spent just over two years working with Joshua Miller, District Ranger for the Lakeside Ranger District to identify possible options for the cemetery's expansion. After extensive conversations and hours of research, Mr. Miller learned that the only clear path forward for the U.S. Forest Service would be to sell the full 5 acres to Navajo County. Unfortunately, this option is not feasible due to time and cost constraints.

As we learned from the sale of the Woodland Lake Park in Pinetop-Lakeside, Arizona, the process to purchase land from the U.S. Forest Service can take years, which is time the Pinedale residents simply don't have! As a matter of fact, I spoke with the local cemetery board and learned they are considering closing off road space and using that for burial space. In addition, we heard from the Forest Services the total acreage for this request is so small, this project would not be expedited through the sale process.

This request comes as a partnership between Navajo County, Apache County, the community of Pinedale, the community of Alpine, and the Apache-Sitgreaves Forests. Given the urgency of this issue, all these partners are committed to working together to find solutions. We are asking Congress' help to pass legislation authorizing a Congressional land delineation of 5 acres within the Sitgreaves Forest for the existing and expanded Pinedale cemetery and 10.62 acres within the Apache Forest for the existing and expanded Alpine cemetery. Without your help, families in these communities will be forced to make the heartbreaking decision to bury their family members somewhere other than their hometown.

Thank you for your time today and I'm available for questions.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes, thank you very much, Supervisor. I now recognize Representative Amodei to introduce our next witness, the Honorable Bryce Shields.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your courtesies.

Bryce Shields is the District Attorney for Pershing County, Nevada, and has been in that position for 8 or 9 years. Getting back to local-based decisions on things like this, he is the representative for Pershing County that has come to our neighborhood today to testify in support of this section, which is the Pershing County Public Lands and Economic Development Act.

You have his information in the booklet that we provided to you under the Pershing County tab. It includes a resolution from the Pershing County Commission, as well as Mr. Bryce's statement, and it is an interesting thing to notice that you are going to hear in that statement that, while it creates 136,000 acres of potential wilderness, that it also releases nearly 50,000 acres of wilderness study areas, which is a big deal in Nevada.

I would be remiss if I did not indicate that Mr. Shields' wife is here with him, who is, in fact, a native of Nevada and a member of the school board, and is here to encourage him. So, I don't want to get in trouble with his wife. You guys can do whatever you want with the District Attorney.

Thank you for your courtesy, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Shields, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRYCE SHIELDS, DISTRICT
ATTORNEY, PERSHING COUNTY, LOVELOCK, NEVADA**

Mr. SHIELDS. Thank you, Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Pershing County. My name is Bryce Shields. I am the District Attorney of Pershing County.

For the last 20 years, the county, together with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, has sought resolution of the county's long-standing public lands issues and associated economic woes, a veritable Gordian's knot. We believe that Title VI of H.R. 3173 cuts this Gordian's knot, accomplishing three equally important objectives: (1) providing a rational, planned resolution to problems associated with checkerboard ownership patterns; (2) promoting favorable conditions for economic development and efficient resource management; and (3) protecting both the county's rural heritage and lands that truly are wild.

Nevada's checkerboard ownership pattern, which is strewn across a 40-mile-wide swath on both sides of Interstate 80 in Pershing County, strains effective management of public lands and restricts public access within the checkerboard. This lack of access stands as a barrier to the county's ability to attract and guide development into sustainable patterns which, in turn, restricts the county's tax base.

Compounding the problem, the Federal Government owns 75.6 percent of the land within Pershing County, leaving only 24.4 percent available for ad valorem taxation. Thus, of the small percentage of land subject to ad valorem taxation in Pershing County, an even smaller percent is suitable for development sufficient to yield tax proceeds of significant value.

Title VI provides a solution to land management and development challenges by directing the sale or exchange of public lands within the checkerboard at fair market value. The proceeds of these transactions will be distributed among the BLM, county, and state. The revenue of these sales will enable the BLM to purchase lands within the county and improve public access, protect important landscapes, and conserve habitat.

Additionally, the sale or exchange of checkerboard lands will likely encourage development in Pershing County communities along the Interstate 80 corridor by creating for the first time the prospect of contiguous parcels of private property within the checkerboard in areas suitable for development. Several businesses, including core mining, new Nevada lands, renewable energy developers, and a data center have already expressed interest in acquiring and consolidating blocks of private ownership within the checkerboard. Such development is crucial to expanding the county's tax base and bringing jobs to our economically stressed region.

Title VI also designates approximately 136,000 acres of BLM as a wilderness within Pershing County in the following areas: Cain Mountain, Bluewing, Fencemaker, Grandfathers', Mount Limbo, and North Sahwave. In exchange, the bill releases roughly 48,000 acres of wilderness study areas throughout the county.

As stewards of Pershing County's unique landscape, we support and recommend the designation of these areas as wilderness. Each of the seven areas under consideration represents some of the most beautiful lands in Pershing County, offering excellent wildlife habitat, spectacular scenery, and solitude. Many of these areas sustain the legacy of rural Nevada as the Bluewing, Fencemaker, Grandfather, and Mount Limbo support watershed vital to important ranches that have thrived in Pershing County for over 100 years. These lands are worthy of preservation for future generations.

We invite the Subcommittee to consider that each proposed area was hand-picked through a collaborative process consisting of diverse stakeholders including the Board of County Commissioners, corporate citizens, conservationists, landowners, miners, ranchers, recreationists, sportsmen, and more. These designations enjoy the unanimous support of both the Board of County Commissioners and those who live, work, and recreate in Pershing County.

In closing, we thank Congressman Amodei for his support of this important legislation, and we urge Congress to pass the bill this year.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shields follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF R. BRYCE SHIELDS, PERSHING COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ON H.R. 3173

Chairman Tiffany and Ranking Member Neguse, on behalf of Pershing County, Nevada, please accept for the official record the testimony of R. Bryce Shields, Pershing County District Attorney, in support of H.R. 3173, the Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2023. We express our sincere appreciation to Congressman Mark Amodei for his unflagging efforts, support, and dedication to this important legislation. While Pershing County endorses H.R. 3173 in its entirety, we submit this testimony specifically in support of Title VI of the bill, the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation provisions.

For the last twenty (20) years, the Pershing County Board of Commissioners (the "BOC"), together with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, has sought the resolution of Pershing County's long-standing public lands issues and concomitant economic woes, a veritable Gordian knot. H.R. 3173 represents a culmination of those united efforts, standing as a testament to the power of grassroots organization and collaborative bipartisan decision making. We believe that Title VI cuts this Gordian knot, accomplishing three equally important objectives: 1) Providing a rational, planned resolution to problems associated with checkerboard ownership patterns; 2) Promoting favorable conditions for economic development and efficient resource management; and 3) Protecting Pershing County lands that are truly wild, along with the County's rural heritage.

Rationalizing the Checkerboard, Promoting Economic Development, and Efficient Resource Management

Nevada's checkerboard ownership pattern, which is strewn across a 40-mile-wide swath of land on each side of Interstate 80 in Pershing County, strains proper BLM management of public lands and restricts public access to checkerboard lands due to the mixture of privately owned parcels. The lack of access to lands within the checkerboard operates as an economic barrier to the County's ability to attract and guide development into sustainable patterns, which in turn restricts the County's tax base. Compounding the problem, the Federal Government owns 75.6% of the land within Pershing County leaving only 24.4% available for ad valorem taxation. Thus, of the small percentage of land subject to ad valorem taxation in Pershing County, an even smaller percentage is suitable for development sufficient to yield tax proceeds of significant value.

Title VI or H.R. 3173 provides a solution to land management and development challenges by directing the sale or exchange of public lands within the checkerboard at fair market value. The proceeds of these transactions will be distributed as follows:

1. 85% to Nevada's BLM to be used for "willing seller" land purchases in Pershing County for conservation, wildlife habitat, recreation, and preservation of other cultural and ecological resources;
2. 10% to the Pershing County budget;
3. 5% to the state of Nevada general education fund per current law.

The proceeds of sales should afford the BLM the opportunity to block up federal land holdings in sensitive areas more appropriate for conservation, recreation, and species habitat and control. In turn, the consolidation of federal property under BLM management, along with increased funding from the proceeds of sales, will likely enable the BLM to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance on public lands in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Additionally, the sale or exchange of checkerboard lands will likely encourage development in communities along the Interstate 80 corridor within Pershing County by creating, for the first time, the prospect of contiguous parcels of private property within the checkerboard in areas suitable for development, i.e., areas in proximity to the power grid, rail transport, and Interstate 80. Several businesses including Coeur Mining, New Nevada Lands, renewable energy developers, and a data center project have expressed interest in acquiring and consolidating blocks of private ownership within the checkerboard. Such development is crucial to expanding the County's tax base and bringing jobs to our economically stressed region.

Protecting Pershing County's Wildlands and Rural Heritage

Title VI designates approximately 136,072 acres of BLM wilderness within the following areas of Pershing County: Cain Mountain (formerly Augusta Mountain), Bluewing, Fencemaker, Grandfather's (China Mountain and the Tobin Range), Mount Limbo, and North Sahwave. In exchange, the bill releases roughly 48,600 acres of Wilderness Study Areas throughout the County.

As stewards of Pershing County's unique landscape, we support and recommend the designation of these areas as wilderness. Each of the seven areas under consideration represents some of the most beautiful lands in Pershing County, offering excellent wildlife habitat, spectacular scenery, and solitude. Many of these areas sustain the legacy of rural Northern Nevada, as the Bluewing, Fencemaker, Grandfather, and Mount Limbo support watersheds vital to important ranches that have thrived in Pershing County for over 100 years. These lands are worthy of preservation for future generations.

We invite the Subcommittee to consider that each proposed area was handpicked through a collaborative process consisting of diverse stakeholders including the BOC, corporate citizens, conservationists, exploration geologists, landowners, miners, ranchers, recreationists, sportsmen, and more. These designations enjoy the unanimous support of both the BOC and others who live, work, and recreate in Pershing County. We urge Congress to respect the wishes of those who know the land and designate the proposed areas as wilderness.

As validation of our recommendation, it is worth noting that Congress designated the portions of Cain Mountain that fall within Churchill and Lander Counties as wilderness under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2023. On that basis, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the portion of Cain Mountain lying within Pershing County should likewise be designated as wilderness under Title VI of H.R. 3173. Moreover, because the remaining six areas under consideration in Pershing County share the same characteristics as Cain Mountain, they too should be designated as wilderness.

In closing, Pershing County appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.R. 3173 and the Pershing provisions. We view this legislation as vital to the economic prosperity of Pershing County and the preservation of our lands for future generations. We urge the Subcommittee to pass this important bill this year.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, District Attorney. I would now like to recognize Representative Maloy to introduce our next witness, Mr. Scott Strong.

Ms. MALOY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Scott Strong has been with the Utah Division of State Parks for almost 15 years. He loves the outdoors, and is passionate about creating positive outdoor experiences for visitors. He is dedicated to promoting an environment that is sustainable and enjoyable. But the most exciting part about this introduction is he has been the Director of State Parks for 2 weeks. So, he is one of the few people in this room who is newer at their job than I am.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Strong.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Strong, you have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF SCOTT STRONG, DIRECTOR, UTAH DIVISION
OF STATE PARKS, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH**

Mr. STRONG. Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, for inviting me to testify in favor of the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act. My name is Scott Strong, and, as has been said, I am the Division of State Parks Director.

In Utah, we are certainly well known for our Mighty Five national parks. We are also very proud of our 46 stunning state parks, where Utahns and our out-of-state guests are welcome to come and play, hike, fish, boat, mountain bike, camp, enjoy the outdoors, learn about our ancestry, and experience our pioneer heritage.

On behalf of the Utah Division of State Parks, I am thrilled to support the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act. I want to thank Congresswoman Maloy, who is insightful and wise in her stewardship of public lands, including state parks public lands.

I would like to discuss how this legislation will enable land conveyances that will improve three of our state parks and expand outdoor recreation and access in Utah.

The first, Fremont Indian State Park. The Castle Rock campground is currently on land owned by the U.S. Forest Service for over two decades. Utah State Parks has operated this campground under a permit from the U.S. Forest Service. Our ambition is to modernize and improve the campground, which includes improving existing roads, trails, and essential utilities for the benefit and access of our users and visitors. A legislative directive enabling this land conveyance will empower Utah State Parks to enhance the campground and streamline on-site management.

Antelope Island State Park. Our inholdings at Antelope Island State Parks were originally sanctioned under the U.S. Department of the Interior's Recreation and Public Purposes Act. Unfortunately, this lease was terminated by the Bureau of Land Management. Gaining ownership through legislative means would improve operational efficiencies and recreational amenities. We plan to integrate these parcels into the park's recreational offerings, while enhancing our trail network, which will expand public access at the park.

Wasatch Mountain State Park. Like Antelope Island State Park, Wasatch Mountain State Park encompasses BLM inholdings of obscure mining claims. The conveyance of this land to Utah State Parks will mitigate administrative costs, streamline management, and improve recreational infrastructure.

The inclusion of these parcels will expand the parks' outdoor recreational state and improve notable enhancements to the trail network, benefiting thousands of park visitors each year.

In conclusion, the conveyance of these lands to Utah State Parks will unlock the potential for considerable improvements in public recreation, active land management, and administration efficiencies. Legislative support for these actions show a commitment to the well-being of our state's natural resources and to the communities that enjoy and rely on them.

I urge the Committee to consider the positive impacts of these proposals. Please support our efforts to actively manage our natural resources for this generation and for future generations to come.

Also, while I am here, I would like to invite each of the Members to come and explore Utah State Parks. They are unique places that you won't experience anywhere else. And I also want to encourage you to interact with our passionate staff who create experiences and memories that last a lifetime.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Strong follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SCOTT STRONG, DIRECTOR, UTAH DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES, DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

ON H.R. 7332

Chairman Tiffany, I am privileged to endorse Representative Maloy's legislative proposal concerning Utah State Parks, which seeks to enable land transfers destined to improve and expand recreation in Utah.

Fremont Indian State Park:

The main campground, Castle Rock Campground, alongside its utilities, is currently on land owned by the Department of Agriculture, United States Forest Service (USFS). For over two decades, we have operated this campground under a permit from the USFS, which must be renewed every five years. Our ambition to modernize this campground with necessary improvements such as paved roads, trails, and essential utilities is hindered by federal restrictions that mandate a more primitive setup due to our status as permittees.

Discussions have occurred between the Utah State Parks (USP) and the local Forest Service Office regarding a potential land exchange. However, the absence of adjacent land owned by USP for such a trade complicates matters. A legislative directive facilitating this land transfer would empower USP to enhance the campground significantly, providing improved recreational facilities and streamlined onsite management.

Antelope Island State Park:

Our tenure of the in-holdings at Antelope Island State Park was originally sanctioned under the Department of Interior's Recreation and Public Purposes Act. Unfortunately, this lease was terminated by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), with no recourse for appeal. Gaining ownership through legislative means would reduce bureaucratic overhead, improve operational efficiency, and enhance recreational amenities. We aim to integrate these parcels into the park's recreational offerings, enhancing the trail network and public access.

Wasatch Mountain State Park:

Similar to Antelope Island State Park, Wasatch Mountain State Park encompasses BLM in-holdings of unpatented mining claims within the Snake Creek Mining District, surrounded mostly by land owned by USP. The cancellation of our lease by BLM has prompted a need for ownership transfer to mitigate administrative costs, streamline management, and improve recreational infrastructure. The inclusion of these parcels would not only expand the park's recreational estate but also provide significant enhancements to the trail network, benefiting numerous outdoor enthusiasts.

In conclusion, the transfer of these lands to Utah State Parks would unlock the potential for considerable improvements in public recreation, active land management efforts, and administrative efficiency. Legislative support for these actions would signify a commitment to the well-being of our state's natural resources and the communities that enjoy and rely on them. I urge the committee to consider the positive impacts of these proposals and support our efforts to secure a brighter, more accessible, and sustainable future for our state parks.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Director Strong, and I would reciprocate. Be sure to come to Wisconsin. You would see truly unique landscapes there also.

Now, I would like to recognize Mr. Espallat for an introduction of our next witness.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and it is with great pleasure that I present to you one of the 50 greatest players of the Rucker Pro League. He played with the great Meadowlark Lemon. We all remember the dribbling of Curly Neal and the dunks of Wilt Chamberlain. He is the Chairman of the retired Harlem Globetrotters and a pioneer of the "Each One Teach One" program.

The Harlem Globetrotters have delighted the world, not just the nation, but the world, through sports and friendship.

Please, Mr. Chairman, help me welcome the great Bobby "Zorro" Hunter, a Harlem Globetrotter who is accompanied by his traditional historic red, white, and blue Harlem Globetrotter basketball.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Hunter, I wish I could give you more than 5 minutes. Well, I will give you a pass.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HUNTER. That is what we do.

**STATEMENT OF BOBBY "ZORRO" HUNTER, CHAIRMAN,
RETIRE HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS, AMBASSADOR, WORLD
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS, TAMARAC, FLORIDA**

Mr. HUNTER. I thank you all because the Rucker Park International Monument will help the community. It helped me.

Rucker Park is very important in my life. It saved me and Holcombe Rucker. He told me to say thank you and please go to the library. And he spoke in a voice that you can always remember. It wasn't offensive. So, every week I go to various basketball clinics and speaking engagements and try to speak in the same manner that he did so I could affect kids in the same way. And then I can see some like me, so I know exactly what to do.

I recently saw Dr. J, who is the first one who did the "Each One Teach One" basketball clinic. I learned a lot from Dr. J during that clinic. Kids were piling in from the streets, and Dr. J sat down and went over not only his life, but their life in a certain manner. And I was really surprised. I saw Dr. J in Vegas at the Legends, and I told him, I said, "Dr. J, you remember you scored 56 points against me?"

And he said, "No."

[Laughter.]

Mr. HUNTER. I said, "Well, that is not what bothers me. You came late, so you scored in a half-time, you scored 56 points."

Bob McCullough and Freddie Crawford, they developed the “Each One Teach One” and that whole Rucker Park scene of bringing in NBA players. Bob McCullough and Freddie Crawford did a magnificent job. NBA players such as Willis Reed; the Reverend Cazzie Russell; Dr. Jim, Reverend Bostic, a tough player, now he is a very kind reverend; Dave Collins, who would come down and feed the kids, trying to steal my fans before the game. I could go on and on with different athletes, such as Joe Hammond, the great Tiny Archibald, and Earl Manigault.

What the young people have done in the community in imitating Rucker has truly been great. I have the “Each One Teach One” Drug Free America program. Bob McCullough, Jr. had the Each One tourism Rucker, where people would come and visit from all over the world. I practiced my Italian 2 years ago.

The community saved a lot of people from harm in the manner of being a calm place where you enjoyed yourself, whether it was a concert, a basketball game, or if you were just there to see someone that you hadn’t seen for a while.

Bob McCullough helped me do a mixed gender basketball tournament there, where men and women played together. So, it was going to be the international love and peace mixed gender basketball teams. Men and women will be playing together in the community. I think this was a great thing in which he did. We are hoping to have this be a part of the Rucker.

There are some other great players from the Rucker that I have not mentioned, but I do want to mention one. We almost had a president. Bill almost became president. That was really something. Bill Bradley would have been the president of the United States coming from the Rucker. That would have been something we could have been very proud of.

The last Rucker player I am most proud of, that would be me. No, I. You can say from Rucker Park to Stanford University. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hunter follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BOBBY “ZORRO” HUNTER, CHAIRMAN, RETIRED HARLEM
GLOBETROTTERS, FORMER HARLEM GLOBETROTTER,
AND INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL AMBASSADOR, WORLD MAYORS CONFERENCE
ON H.R. 6852

Dear Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Grijalva, Chairman Tiffany, and Ranking Member Neguse: Rucker Park holds immense significance for the community of Harlem and plays a pivotal role in tourism. Recently, a Harlem tour featuring Rucker Park, alongside other historical sites such as the Renaissance, underscored its importance.

Today, I will speak passionately about Holcombe Rucker, my teacher and mentor, and his profound impact on me and countless other young men in our community.

Additionally, I will highlight the invaluable contributions of the Rucker Park All-Stars and discuss the transformative “Each One Teach One Program” that originated from this historic basketball court and has since resonated across the United States. Noteworthy figures such as Dr. Reverend Jim Bostic, Reverend Cassie Russell, Bob McCullough, and Freddie Crawford, alongside revered players like Senator Bill Bradley, exemplify the enduring legacy of Rucker Park.

Lastly, I will share the remarkable journey of my personal hero, myself, Bobby Hunter, who transitioned from Rucker Park to Stanford University, symbolizing the boundless potential nurtured within our community.

Rucker Park is an integral part of Harlem, New York City, fostering pride and drawing visitors from around the globe. Its significance lies not only in its historical

importance but also in the profound impact it has had on individuals like me, who have been fortunate enough to benefit from its legacy.

Holcombe Rucker's commitment to uplifting and guiding youth, which facilitated over 700 scholarships through his program, is a testament to the enduring impact of his vision. The Rucker Park All-Stars, serving as beacons of inspiration, have cultivated a culture of excellence and mentorship, as evidenced by the far-reaching influence of the "Each One Teach One Program."

Dr. Reverend Jim Bostic, Reverend Cassie Russell, Bob McCullough, and Freddie Crawford are among the esteemed individuals who have championed community empowerment through initiatives stemming from Rucker Park. Their efforts, alongside the achievements of players such as Tiny Archibald and Dr. J, epitomize the transformative potential of sports and mentorship.

Moreover, the legacy of Rucker Park transcends sports, as exemplified by Senator Bill Bradley, whose journey from the court to the political arena underscores the power of community and opportunity.

In conclusion, the designation of Holcombe Rucker Park as a National Commemorative Site is both warranted and overdue.

I wholeheartedly endorse H.R. 6852—the Holcombe Rucker Park Landmark Act and extend my gratitude to Congressman Adriano Espaillat for his leadership in introducing this legislation. I also commend the Committee on Natural Resources for their consideration of this historic measure. As we move forward, I urge swift action to pass this legislation and honor the rich legacy of Rucker Park. Rest assured, countless supporters stand behind this non-controversial bill, eager to see it become law.

In summary, Rucker Park's enduring legacy serves as a beacon of inspiration, impacting not only Harlem but communities far and wide. Its influence transcends generations, embodying the spirit of resilience, excellence, and community empowerment.

Thank you for your time.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you very much, Mr. Hunter. And now I am going to recognize Ms. Annie Harris, Director and CEO of Essex Heritage.

Ms. Harris, 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ANNIE HARRIS, DIRECTOR AND CEO, ESSEX HERITAGE, SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Ms. HARRIS. That is a tough act to follow, but good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Annie Harris, and I am Director of Essex Heritage, which is the management entity for the Essex National Heritage Area, which is the region in eastern Massachusetts just north of Boston. Our mission is to preserve and promote the Heritage Area's historic, cultural, and natural resources, and we accomplish our mission by working in collaborative partnerships with non-profits, government agencies, educational institutions, and citizen groups.

And one of our most important historic resources and collaborative partners is with the Salem Maritime National Historic Site. I am here to speak in favor of the bill to change its name and to do a boundary study.

Salem Maritime has 10 historic structures, 4 historic wharves, including Derby Wharf, where the replica tall ship Friendship is berthed. It also has a lighthouse and a museum collection with more than 4,500 objects, and the park owns and manages the Salem Regional Visitor Center in downtown Salem, where national park rangers welcome more than 300,000 visitors annually.

Salem Maritime was established in 1938 as the first national historic site. It was created to preserve New England and

America's maritime history and the development of international maritime trade starting in the late 17th century. But during the past eight decades, the original purpose has been expanded through additional legislation and boundary changes, and also new scholarship and interpretation, and now the focus has expanded to also include domestic life in colonial New England, northern slavery, 18th, 19th, and 21st century immigration, and traditional maritime shipbuilding.

For these reasons, it is important to change the name of Salem Maritime to more accurately reflect the park's multiple nationally important themes and numerous historic, significant structures. The site's title, "Historic Site," does not fully convey the rich, multi-faceted experience that this park provides to the American public. Renaming the park Salem Maritime National Historical Park will more accurately communicate to the public the larger themes and resources available at the park.

I also want to speak in favor of the boundary study, which directs the Park Service to look at nearby resources associated with military history. Close to the Salem Maritime Site exists three very important American Revolutionary War forts. There is also the 1637 site of the first muster, which marks the beginnings of the National Guard. And within Salem Harbor, there are former shipyards, marine structures, and shipwrecks, signifying the area's extensive maritime heritage from the earliest times. The National Park Service study will help organize and elevate this information. And even if Congress ultimately decides not to extend Salem Maritime's boundaries to include any of these sites, the study will still be very beneficial in expanding the public's knowledge of this nationally significant history.

And lastly, the redesignation will have positive economic benefits. The renaming will generate renewed interest from the media and visitors. The public is more likely to see the park as a significant destination worth visiting. The new name will provide more marketing opportunities to highlight the park's expansive scope, and it will bring more public attention to the fact that the history of Salem extends beyond the Salem witch trials of 1692. It will help spread these benefits of tourism beyond the months of September and October. The strengthening of visitation outside these months in the fall will increase the job opportunities in the city, provide more employment for local residents, and expand the tax revenue.

Additionally, there will be new opportunities for Salem Maritime to increase revenue from new tours and special events.

So, with that, I hope you will favorably look upon this bill, and thank you for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Harris follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANNIE C. HARRIS, DIRECTOR AND CEO, ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE COMMISSION, INC.

ON H.R. 1647

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to give testimony for H.R. 1647—the Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act.

My name is Annie Harris, and I am the Director and CEO of the Essex National Heritage Commission, Inc., commonly known as Essex Heritage, which is the management entity for the Essex National Heritage Area. The national heritage area

was designed by Congress in 1996. It encompasses 500 square miles of eastern Massachusetts, north of Boston, stretching along the Atlantic coast to the New Hampshire border. The heritage area has a population of more than 800,000 people and hosts nearly 2 million visitors annually. The cultural and historic themes of the area are colonial era settlement, maritime industry & trade, the industrial revolution, and immigration. The natural resources in the area include significant marshlands and tidal estuaries, a rocky coast region, freshwater rivers, inland woodlands, historic farms, and town commons. Within the boundaries of the national heritage area, lie the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, two national parks—Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, 28 National Historic Landmarks, and 481 National Register of Historic Places districts and sites. The Essex Heritage's mission is to preserve and promote these historic, cultural, and natural resources. We accomplish our mission by working collaboratively in partnerships with non-profits, governmental agencies (federal and state), municipalities, educational institutions, and citizen groups across the national heritage area.

The Salem Maritime National Historic Site is one of the foremost historic resources within the Essex National Heritage Area. It was established in 1938 as the first National Historic Site in the United States¹ and it was created to preserve and present America's and New England's maritime history and the important role that Salem played in the development of international maritime trade from the late 17th century through the 19th century. In the past 86 years, the original purpose has been expanded through additional legislation and boundary changes,² accompanied by new scholarship and interpretation. The park's focus has grown to include the domestic life of colonial Salem, northern slavery, 19th and 20th century immigration and industrial history, and the evolution of historic preservation and cultural landscape practices.³ Recent scholarship has identified that the nationally important themes of Coastal Defense (1640-WWII), and US Military History including the Birthplace of the National Guard could also be more fully told by this park.

The Salem Maritime National Historic Site contains 10 historic structures, numerous archeological resources, four historic wharves, a lighthouse, a museum collection with more than 4,500 objects, and a significant cultural landscape including the tall ship *Friendship of Salem*, a replica of an 18th century merchant vessel. The park owns and manages the Salem Regional Visitor Center located beyond the park's boundary in downtown Salem. At this visitor center, NPS rangers welcome more than 300,000+ annual visitors to the park and to the heritage area. The park also collaborates outside its boundaries with numerous heritage resources and has formed partnerships with other organizations to extend its interpretive and educational outreach. These collaborations include working with the Essex National Heritage Area, the Peabody Essex Museum, the Salem Athenaeum, The House of the Seven Gables, the region's National Historic Landmarks and National Register Districts along with other historical societies, museums, and historic preservationists.

For these reasons, it is important to change the name of the Salem Maritime to more accurately reflect the park's multiple, nationally important themes and numerous historically significant structures. The title *historic site* does not fully convey the rich, multifaceted experience that this park provides to the American public. The National Park Service explains in its literature that "national historic sites . . . contain a single historical feature, but national historical parks . . . discuss multiple stories from different times."⁴ Also, park units that have non-contiguous resources are usually given the broader title of *historical park*. Redesignating the site as the Salem Maritime National Historical Park will more accurately communicate to the public the larger themes, stories, and resources available at this park, and the new name will similarly assist in communicating that the downtown visitor center is part of the park.

I would like to speak also in favor of the boundary study whose purpose is to study and evaluate sites and resources associated military and maritime history in the greater Salem area. Within a mile of Salem Maritime still stand three very important Revolutionary War sites—Fort Lee, Fort Pickering, and Fort Sewall. There is also the site of the 1637 first muster which marked the beginnings of the National Guard. Within Salem Harbor lie former shipyards, maritime structures,

¹ www.NPS.gov/sama/index.htm

² PL 88-199, PL 95-625, PL 101-632

³ *Foundation Document, Salem Maritime National Historic Site*; National Park Service, US Department of the Interior; 2019.

⁴ <https://www.doi.gov/blog/americas-public-lands-explained>

aids to navigation, natural hazards, and shipwrecks, abundant reminders of the area's extensive maritime heritage from Indigenous settlements through World War I—with especially rich historical artifacts from the 18th and 19th centuries. As technology and research have become more sophisticated, these objects and sites are easier to identify and interpret. The NPS study will enhance the growing body of knowledge and support this scholarly research. Even if the National Park Service and Congress ultimately decide not to extend Salem Maritime's boundaries to include any additional sites, the study will be beneficial in expanding our collective knowledge of this nationally significant history.

Lastly, we believe that the redesignation will have several positive economic benefits for the park and the City of Salem. Renaming the site will generate renewed interest from tourists and the media and serve to elevate its status in the public eye. Visitors will be more likely to view the park as a significant destination worth visiting, thereby increasing foot traffic and tourism revenue. The new name will provide more marketing opportunities to highlight the park's expanded scope and draw attention to its diverse historical attractions. It will also help to signify that the history of Salem extends far beyond the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. It will serve to attract a broader audience to visit Salem, and it is likely to spread the benefits of tourism beyond the months of September and October. This, in turn, will strengthen the city's job opportunities in the hospitality, retail, and tourism sectors, providing more employment for local residents and generating tax revenue for the community. Additionally, there will be new opportunities for revenue generation at the park site from tours and special events.

In summary, I hope that this committee will look favorably on the proposed legislation. Thank you for this opportunity to present my testimony.

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you very much, Ms. Harris. Now, I want to recognize Representative LaLota to introduce our next witness.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you, Chairman. Traveling to our great Nation's Capital all the way from New York, Long Island, Suffolk County, but most specifically, the great town of Southold, is my constituent, Ms. Louise Harrison of Save the Sound.

Ms. Harrison, thanks so much for being with us today.

Ms. Harrison is a conservation biologist who has served on Long Island in various Federal, New York State, and Suffolk County agencies as well as in leadership and consulting positions for non-profit environmental organizations. Ms. Harrison has served as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service liaison to the Long Island Sound Study, where she concentrated on stewardship of Long Island Sound's ecosystems, habitat restoration projects, and invasive species control.

Ms. Harrison also has extensive field experience working with coastal communities and natural ecosystems from the boroughs of New York City all the way out to Montauk and Orient Points, and has received numerous awards for open space preservation efforts. In fact, in 2009, Ms. Harrison was awarded the Star Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for her leadership in Long Island Sound stewardship.

Ms. Harrison currently serves as the Long Island Natural Areas Manager for Save the Sound, a local non-profit whose mission it is to protect and improve the land, air, and water of the whole Long Island Sound region.

Thank you again, and we appreciate you being with us today.

Mr. TIFFANY. Ms. Harrison, you have 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF LOUISE HARRISON, LONG ISLAND NATURAL AREAS MANAGER, SAVE THE SOUND, SOUTHOLD, NEW YORK

Ms. HARRISON. Chairperson Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak about H.R. 1584, the Plum Island National Monument Act.

Thank you, Representative LaLota, for introducing this legislation and for your leadership on this issue, and to Representatives Courtney, Garbarino, D'Esposito, Himes, and Lawler for co-sponsoring this important bipartisan legislation.

My name is Louise Harrison, Long Island Natural Areas Manager at Save the Sound. It is an honor to be here today to address this legislation. I am speaking on behalf of Save the Sound and the Preserve Plum Island Coalition.

Save the Sound leads environmental action in the Long Island Sound region. We fight climate change, save endangered lands, protect the sound and its rivers, and work with nature to restore ecosystems. We know that Long Island Sound is among the most important and valuable estuaries in the nation, generating over \$9 billion annually. And at the eastern end of Long Island Sound is Plum Island, New York.

The 125-plus national, regional, and local organizations of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition are united by our goal of achieving permanent protection for the remarkable ecological, historical, and cultural resources of Plum Island. Save the Sound coordinates the coalition's activities. The coalition enthusiastically supports H.R. 1584 to designate Plum Island as a national monument for the purpose of ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage. We found widespread support from across the United States for preserving this national treasure in the public trust.

The benefits of preserving Plum Island and its ecological riches at the very entrance to Long Island Sound are many. A national monument could return sustainable access to the people. It could tell the story of a unique American landscape, a key component of one of the very last wild coastal ecosystems where the waters of two national estuaries meet and mix.

Since the 1660s, most people's access to Plum Island has been severely restricted or even prohibited. We want to reverse this inequity. The Montaukett Indian Nation has told us that Plum Island is an important part of their cultural heritage and historical territory. Access restored will offer the chance once again to practice cultural traditions and visit sacred sites.

Although Plum Island already is recognized for being part of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service significant coastal habitat, and is designated as a unit of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System, and is the site of the Plum Island Light Station and the Fort Terry Historic District, both on the National Register of Historic Places, and adjoins the Plum Gut significant coastal fish and wildlife habitat under the Coastal Zone Management Act, it has no permanent protection. Its fate is unknown.

The organizations in the Preserve Plum Island Coalition, whose members count in the millions, believe it should remain in the public trust for the purposes stated in the bill. A designation would allow for management planning to begin now. Multiple themes and

attributes may be combined for protection, further research, public access, and education. We see the national monument as the model offering the greatest flexibility.

Plum Island is the biological linchpin of a beautiful chain of islands between three states: New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Its iconic lighthouse and wild shores are in the view of thousands of boaters, fishers, and inter-state ferry passengers who wonder about it and wait for the chance to get closer to this part of American history and the American story. Let us celebrate and protect this national treasure with the passage of H.R. 1584.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our support today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Harrison follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LOUISE HARRISON, LONG ISLAND NATURAL AREAS
MANAGER, SAVE THE SOUND

ON H.R. 1584

Chairperson Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your invitation to speak before you today about H.R. 1584, the Plum Island National Monument Act. Thank you to Representative LaLota for introducing this legislation and for his leadership on this issue, and to Representatives Courtney, Garbarino, D'Esposito, Himes, and Lawler for co-sponsoring this important bipartisan legislation.

My name is Louise Harrison, Long Island Natural Areas Manager at Save the Sound. It is an honor to be here today and address this legislation. I do so on behalf of Save the Sound and the Preserve Plum Island Coalition.

Save the Sound leads environmental action in the Long Island Sound region. We fight climate change, save endangered lands, protect the Sound and its rivers, and work with nature to restore ecosystems. Save the Sound is a founding member of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition; we coordinate the coalition's activities.

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition (PPIC) is made up of over 120 national, regional, and local organizations. The mission of the PPIC is to

secure the permanent protection of the significant natural, historical, and cultural resources of Plum Island. The PPIC advocates for comprehensive conservation and management solutions that safeguard this national treasure in the public trust as a national monument, wildlife refuge, preserve, or other equivalent protection, with carefully managed and equitable public access, in perpetuity. Through the course of this incredible multi-year campaign, the mission of the PPIC has been refined to clarify and prioritize the most promising opportunities for the permanent preservation of this magnificent natural and cultural asset.

We enthusiastically support H.R. 1584 and its resulting designation of federally owned Plum Island as a national monument **for the purpose of ecological conservation, historical preservation, and the discovery and celebration of our shared cultural heritage.**

Widespread Support

We invite you to visit the PPIC's website, <https://www.preserveplumisland.org>, where you will find a great deal of information about Plum Island, our campaign, and the widespread support from across the United States for preserving this national treasure. We especially encourage examination of the volume we compiled last September, *Plum Island Campaign Support*, which contains over a decade of expressed support from elected officials, organizations, individuals, and media outlets for protecting Plum Island. This document may be found on our website's campaign support page.

Introduction

Preserving Plum Island as a national monument would return sustainable, managed access to this federal asset to the people and help tell the story of a unique American landscape in Eastern Long Island Sound. About 110 miles from New York City, the island is a key component of one of the very last large, wild, coastal ecosystems in the nationally celebrated Long Island Sound and Peconic Estuary—both

designated National Estuaries. Plum Island is where, for thousands of years, people interacted with and were served by nature, and where, for the past few hundred years, most people's access has been severely restricted or even prohibited.

The Montaukett Indian Nation was dispossessed of Plum Island in the 1600s. Private ownership and subsequent federal uses of the island as a military installation and, later, security surrounding the island's famous animal disease research laboratory have made Plum Island off limits for most people. Now that the Department of Homeland Security is nearing the end of its mission on the island, it is time to declare that Plum Island truly belongs to the people of the United States whose history it so well charts. To return to the people the stewardship and enjoyment of the island's significant ecological and cultural riches, the PPIC seeks permanent protection of the island and long-term, public-philanthropic stewardship and potential public-private partnerships.

Over 600 acres of this 822-acre island have been given defacto protection from development in the past 70 years because they buffer the successor to Fort Terry, the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC), which is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS is preparing for the PIADC's world-famous food-security research on animal diseases to be transferred to the new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kansas. DHS endeavors to decommission the Plum Island facility and to meet the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's cleanup requirements.

The location and geology of the island, its agrarian use before the federal purchase (in 1897 and 1901), and Army and DHS measures limiting development and access, have resulted in tremendous biological diversity. The island is home to 111 at-risk plant and animal species. Two hundred and twenty-nine (229) species of birds have been sighted there, which is nearly a quarter of all bird species in North America, north of Mexico. The island hosts 24 different ecological communities. Together and in their island context, these habitats are integral to the basis for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's designating Plum Island as part of a Significant Coastal Habitat. A 97-acre freshwater wetland affords habitat and drinking water for island and wetland wildlife. The island is surrounded by pristine underwater communities teeming with marine life, which have remained that way due to lack of extensive development on the island.

Endangered Roseate Terns forage in the waters around Plum Island and take shelter on its rocky shores. The island also is home to one of the largest seal haul-out areas in Southern New England and the largest one in New York State.

Plum Island has become the biological linchpin of a beautiful New York archipelago that adjoins Connecticut and Rhode Island and is in view of thousands of boaters, fishers, and ferry passengers.

Preservation through a National Monument Designation

The PPIC supports a national monument designation as a vehicle for preservation because it can permit flexibility in coordinating and comprehensively managing Plum Island's wide array of resources—ecological, historical, cultural—and, through a carefully crafted management plan, lead to custom-tailoring a sustainable, equitable visitation program. Under a national monument designation, multiple themes and attributes may be combined for protection, further research, and public access and education.

Designation will begin the process of righting long-standing wrongs that have prevented members of the Montaukett Indian Nation, an historic tribe seeking federal reaffirmation, from visiting the island. The Montauketts have told us they consider Plum Island to be an important part of their cultural heritage and territory. Restoring access to Plum Island will give them the chance, after more than three-and-a-half centuries, to practice cultural traditions and visit sacred sites. A Plum Island National Monument will also help educate the public about the significance of the island's Trust species, rare plants and animals, exemplary ecological communities, and its fascinating role in American history.

Near-term Action and Management Planning

The PPIC believes it is imperative to designate Plum Island as a national monument now to prevent degradation of some of what makes Plum Island so special. The Department of Homeland Security has already engaged in extensive outdoor restoration, and it can complete decommissioning of the indoor facilities notwithstanding a national monument designation. We support designation as a national monument as soon as possible, with management planning commencing immediately. This can be accomplished with support of the PPIC and Friends of Plum Island, a 501(c)(3) organization, and involve members of the Montaukett Indian Nation and the general public.

Although more can always be learned about the island's fascinating resources, there is a great deal of information already available on Plum Island's biodiversity and history. Resource management planning, undertaken as soon as possible and employing the vast amount of information already available, will help ensure protection of sensitive ecological communities and species. This can allow near-term control of adverse impacts, such as incursions of invasive species, already gaining a foothold and posing threats to nesting birds, rare plants, and wetland resources. Rooftop maintenance of former Army barracks would help prevent further deterioration while historic resource inventories proceed under the Section 106 report currently in preparation by DHS.

A management plan should guide future public access and education, ensuring that visitation is not only equitable but that it also proceeds at environmentally sustainable levels and frequency, once the laboratory facility is fully decommissioned.

Envisioning Plum Island

Save the Sound and The Nature Conservancy in 2018 and 2019 conducted *Envision Plum Island* to articulate a vision for the island's future. In this process, hundreds of stakeholders met in small and large groups, aided by consulting firm Marstel-Day, LLC, to create a plan that is now reflected in the core elements of H.R. 1584's designation of Plum Island as a national monument. The report we produced, available on the PPIC website, here, was presented in 2020 to the members of Congress who had requested it; within six months, Congress repealed its previous requirement to sell Plum Island at a public sale (laws enacted in 2008 and 2012). We were greatly relieved that Plum Island was off the "auction block," but the desire to find a permanent preservation solution was stronger than ever, bolstered by the growing enthusiasm generated by Envision Plum Island and shown in PPIC's growth in membership.

Updated Vision

The PPIC since has revised the Plum Island vision somewhat, based on changing circumstances, such as the repeal of the sale language, the subsequent reinstatement of the normal federal property disposition process, and the existence of a major donor. The donor has expressed interest in funding stewardship, programs, and other long-term preservation activities at Plum Island. In addition, we consider historical preservation to be achievable through interpretation of the island's rich history for the public, instead of requiring structures to be rehabilitated or opened for visitation—though conversion of a small Army building into an educational outpost is something to consider in the future for the researchers who have expressed strong interest in accessing the island for research and teaching reasons.

Rather than a full transfer of Plum Island to New York State, as we had previously envisioned, the PPIC now fully supports a federal approach that partners with the Montaukett Indian Nation, the State of New York, local entities, and the community. We call for a full telling and reckoning of America's history—from times of ecological abundance to those of significant cultural disservice, and on further to the last 70 years of globally significant scientific inquiry and innovation at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center. We are not surprised and are delighted to know that the PIADC is being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. There is also a highly significant civil rights court martial that occurred on the island in 1914 that is worthy of further study and recognition.

We also envision a visitor center and small museum at the government-owned Plum Island ferry parcel at Orient Point—across Plum Gut from Plum Island—in an existing building, which would attract many daily visitors disembarking the highly successful Cross Sound Ferry, situated immediately next door, within walking distance. The benefits of preserving Plum Island and its ecological riches, at the very entrance to Long Island Sound—which plays a huge role in supporting the regional economy—are nearly inestimable.

Our vision can be fully realized through the designation of Plum Island as a national monument.

Economic Value

The countless activities dependent on Long Island Sound generate about \$9.4 billion annually (adjusted for inflation in 2015 dollars) in the regional economy, according to the Long Island Sound Study. With the uses it serves and the recreational opportunities it provides, Long Island Sound is among the most important and valuable estuaries in the nation. Of course, water quality, living resources, and habitats keep this economic engine running.

Plum Island may be seen as the biological and ecological linchpin of an archipelago that reaches across the outer, eastern Long Island Sound from the North

Fork of Long Island, all the way to Napatree Point in Rhode Island. Careful stewardship of this landscape is required to protect the special “cocktail” of clean, oxygenated ocean water mixed with productive estuarine waters that makes Long Island Sound the economic powerhouse it is today. A national monument designation of the island will enhance this value economically by providing educational, research, and cultural opportunities that adhere to a resource-focused management plan for long-term stewardship and sustainability.

Studies of Plum Island

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition has compiled information we present here today, as well as much more, using numerous professional studies and publications. We would be pleased to provide a full bibliography on request. We especially rely on and encourage examination of:

- Professional biodiversity field studies of Plum Island undertaken by the New York Natural Heritage Program, available at <https://www.nynhp.org/projects/plum-island-inventory/>.
- Extensive research on Plum Island history, presented in *A World Unto Itself—The Remarkable History of Plum Island, New York*, by Ruth Ann Bramson, Geoffrey K. Fleming, and Amy Kasuga Folk, 2014, (388 pp.). Available through the Southold Historical Society.
- An inquiry into the Montaukett Indian Nation’s dispossession of Plum Island by celebrated scholar on Long Island Native Americans, John A. Strong, in an article entitled, “The Plum Island deed game: A case study in dispossession of Indian land on Long Island,” published in the *Journal of the Suffolk County Historical Society*, Volume XXXI, December 2017 (pp. 3-25).

The following people have contributed information that supplements this testimony:

- Marian Lindberg, Conservation Projects Manager, The Nature Conservancy in New York
- Matthew Schlesinger, Chief Zoologist, New York Natural Heritage Program
- John Turner, Spokesperson for the Preserve Plum Island Coalition and Senior Conservation Policy Advocate, Seatuck Environmental Association

Special Designations

Because of its location, natural features, and ecological communities, Plum Island has received, or lies within areas that have received, the following government recognition and designations:

- Within (at confluence of) two estuaries designated by Congress as Estuaries of National Significance—Long Island Sound (Long Island Sound Study) and the Peconic Estuary (Peconic Estuary Partnership)
- Designated a unit (NY-24) of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS)
- Within four miles of the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), a formal partnership between NOAA and the state of Connecticut, designated in 2022 and encompassing 52,160 upland and offshore acres
- Part of an NEP Long Island Sound Study Stewardship Area (“Plum and Gull Islands”)
- Part of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Significant Coastal Habitat (Site 7)
- Adjoins New York State’s Plum Gut Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Within New York State’s Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Protection Area
- Within the Suffolk County, New York, Peconic Bay Environs Critical Environmental Area
- 350 acres zoned as Town of Southold’s Plum Island Conservation District (PIC)
- Site of the Plum Island Light Station, listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Site of Fort Terry Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Biological and Ecological Significance of Plum Island

Despite a long history of human use, Plum Island and the marine waters immediately surrounding it contain a diverse assemblage of natural communities. The island's natural, terrestrial ecological communities—totaling more than two dozen, according to an assessment by the New York Natural Heritage program—have remained nearly untouched since the 1950s, when the U.S. Army ended its use of the island. These natural ecological communities range from forested areas, including successional maritime forests, maritime shrub- and heathland communities, and a wetland forest dominated by red maple and black tupelo to an extensive 97-acre freshwater wetland, where blueberry bog thickets, emergent marsh, and shrub swamps provide habitat for wetland-dependent plant and animal species.

Plum Island boasts marine rocky subtidal and intertidal, beach, bluff, and dune communities which ring the island; five of these have been identified as significant by the New York Natural Heritage Program. A maritime dune community exists in the southwestern corner of Plum Island and this area and a wide sandy beach along the island's southern boundary provide nesting habitat to Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), the East Coast population of which is listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*) also breeds on its sandy beaches. Several of these natural communities are rare in New York State or regionally, and a few, such as maritime dunes and heathlands, represent especially high-quality examples.

The island's assemblage of natural communities supports many plant and animal species. Two-hundred-twenty (220) bird species were seen on Plum Island from 2006 to 2016, which is more than one fifth of the 1,023 species comprising total avifauna of the North American continent north of Mexico, with 61 species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), 17 of which are high priority SGCN as classified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The latest count of birds seen at Plum Island is 229. The bird surveys have been performed by and on behalf of Audubon New York, which has designated Orient Point and Plum Island as an Important Bird Area.

Several dozen bird species breed here, while many others pass through during migration or overwinter on the island. The high frequency of sightings of large numbers of passerines during spring and fall migration underscores the island's significant value in providing migratory stop-over habitat. Birds of prey occur on Plum Island. Although the number of nests fluctuates, as many as ten Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) nests have existed on Plum Island. Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) occur here too, as do several accipiter and falcon species during migration. Several Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) colonies exist in the high bluffs situated along the southern shoreline of the island; the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology website *All About Birds* reports that in general Bank Swallow numbers have crashed by an estimated 89% since 1970.

A notable component regarding the island's avifauna is its value to several species of rare terns, including Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), a state-listed threatened species, and Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*), a state- and federally listed endangered bird. These species breed on nearby Great Gull Island, which boasts the largest breeding colony of Roseate Terns in the western hemisphere, containing as many as 1,300 breeding pairs, and the largest breeding colony of Common Terns in the world, with approximately 9,500 pairs. Plum Island serves as developmental habitat for these species, where they often rest, and the waters surrounding the island are rich in the bait fish on which these species forage. With sea level rise likely to adversely impact Great Gull Island, Plum Island may take on much greater significance in the future in providing breeding habitat for Roseate and Common Terns.

One of the larger seal haul-out sites in southern New England, and the largest in New York, occurs along the southern side of the eastern tip of the island. During the winter months, several hundred harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and several dozen grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) can be seen resting on large offshore boulders or swimming in the waters in between.

Immediately surrounding Plum Island are high quality marine communities in New York State waters containing a high diversity of species. These communities include an eelgrass meadow north of the island's harbor, an eelgrass restoration area along the southeastern shore, and a New York State—significant intertidal rocky shoreline, among others. Two scientific dive surveys to investigate marine biota have taken place in the waters around Plum Island over the past decade; scientists documented 126 species of marine flora and fauna, including macroalgae, sponges, corals, bryozoans, jellyfish, comb jellies, crabs, tubeworms, gastropods,

bivalves, and barnacles. The large, submerged boulders are a common colonization site for many of these species.

Regarding the terrestrial flora of Plum Island, a 2013 professional paper by Ph.D. botanist Eric E. Lamont, published in the *Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* notes: “Plum Island, New York, has one of the highest concentrations of rare plants in the state and supports a high diversity of native plant species. The island’s varied topography and diverse ecological communities have contributed to the diverse flora; for much of the past 100 years, approximately 90% of the island has remained undeveloped. The vascular flora consists of 414 species within 270 genera and 92 families. Twenty-three species are listed as endangered, threatened, or rare in New York. Of these 23 species, 17 are extant, having been observed in the field during this study, and six are considered extirpated . . .” Spring ladies’ tresses (*Spiranthes vernalis*), a graceful and beautiful orchid species, serves as an excellent example of the many rare plants occurring here—a very rare species in the state—and as many as several hundred plants have been found in the former military parade grounds region of Plum Island.

The ecological relationships between the federally owned Plum Island, the biologically diverse and clean waters of eastern Long Island Sound and the Peconic Estuary, and nearby islands in the same archipelago are significant and interdependent.

History of Plum Island

It is our understanding that the Department of Homeland Security is preparing an NHPA Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) and Historic Properties Management Plan as part of its required work in the decommissioning of the PIADC. We look forward to reading it and hope it can be a useful component of a comprehensive Plum Island resource management plan.

Much of what we offer below is based on the Bramson et al. book, *A World Unto Itself—The Remarkable History of Plum Island, New York*; Robert Hefner’s 1998 *Historic Resources Survey: Plum Island, New York*; and research conducted by Marian Lindberg in preparation for her 2020 book, *Scandal on Plum Island—A Commander becomes the Accused*. We will gladly provide additional references on request.

1600s

After its dispossession from the Montauketts in the mid-1600s, as stated in *A World Unto Itself*, “Plum Island’s story is really America’s story, in miniature.”

In 1675, prevailing over other colonists who sought ownership of Plum Island, Samuel Wyllys [Willis] received a patent and manorial rights to the island from Edmund Andros, the fourth colonial governor of New York. Wyllys, a Connecticut magistrate, and son-in-law of Connecticut’s first governor, had helped Andros gain the allegiance of the three eastern Long Island towns (including Plum Island’s town of Southold) after the towns’ leaders resisted New York’s authority, citing Connecticut’s help defending them against the Dutch.

Wyllys did not live on Plum Island, but used its land to graze livestock, possibly for shipment to Antigua, where he co-owned a sugar plantation and at least some of the workers were enslaved. The possible role of Plum Island in supporting the sugarcane economy is of interest to the Plain Sight Project.

1700s

Plum Island was divided into separate farm holdings controlled by a few families after Wyllys sold the island to John Dudley, the son of a Massachusetts Bay Colony governor and future governor himself of the Province of Massachusetts Bay and New Hampshire.

In August 1775, the British stole livestock from Plum Island, inciting a naval skirmish. Long Island fell to the British one year later, by which time residents of Plum Island had fled to the mainland. “During the revolution, the British fleet used Plum Island primarily as a source of clean water for its warships. Other resources, such as lumber, grain, corn and livestock, were also seized.”

1800s

Residents returned to Plum Island after the Revolutionary War, but in the War of 1812, “Plum Island became a staging location for British and, early on, American naval forces,” including a blockade by the Royal Navy, according to *A World Unto Itself*. Although the war ended in December 1814, British ships remained around Plum Island until March 1815.

With the construction of a light station in 1829, a lighthouse keeper joined the farming families on Plum Island. Nonetheless, shipwrecks occurred because of the

unpredictable currents of Plum Gut. The lighthouse was replaced in 1869; this structure remains and is listed as the Plum Island Light Station in the **National Register of Historic Places**.

During the mid- to late-1800s, city dwellers seeking to escape urban heat and boaters began visiting Plum Island in summertime. Farmers allowed clubs to set up camps, and the lighthouse keeper provided meals. The fishing around Plum Island became known as so exceptional that even Grover Cleveland fished its waters.

Beginning in 1883, a man acting secretly on behalf of unidentified investors bought the farms of Plum Island, leading to ownership of the island (except the lighthouse) in 1889 by Abram Hewitt, a wealthy industrialist and recent New York City mayor. It was rumored that Hewitt intended to build a resort, but the United States had a different plan: national security. In 1897, as tensions heated up with Spain over its occupation of Cuba, Congress authorized a defense post on Plum Island because of its strategic location at the mouth of Long Island Sound. Hewitt sold Plum Island for the construction of the Army's Fort Terry in two installments, 193 acres in 1897, and 647 acres in 1901.

1900s to Present

Most of the buildings at Fort Terry (1898–1948) were constructed between 1898 and 1912.

The central administrative structures remain in their original locations, adjacent to the former parade grounds, including “Endicott and Taft Period post buildings which are significant for representing national types,” according to Robert Hefner in his 1998 *Historic Resources Survey: Plum Island, New York*. Former gun batteries also remain along the coastline, including one, Battery Steele, said to be unique in the nation.

Fort Terry was an important site for multi-fort military drills, including joint Army-Navy war games, and served as a training and transport location for Army recruits in World Wars I and II.

Fort Terry's extant buildings, including large former barracks and the fort's hospital, guard house, and post exchange, were added to the **National Register of Historic Places** in 2021, along with the parade grounds and 11 former gun batteries and other tactical structures on the coast, forming a “Fort Terry Historic District.” As the Department of Homeland Security stated in its 80-page application:

“Fort Terry was established in 1898 based on recommendations for improvements to United States coastal defenses contained in an 1885 report from the Endicott Board. Fort Terry was later modified based on a report from the Taft Board in 1906. [A]s a whole the district retains a significant number of character-defining elements and is able to illustrate the fort's significant themes from the period of significance.”

An incendiary court-martial that garnered national attention and Cabinet-level involvement took place at Fort Terry in 1914 when the commanding officer, Major Benjamin M. Koehler, was accused of groping male subordinates. He claimed the charges were concocted by disgruntled to oust him. This early case of alleged sexual harassment marked the beginning of federal policies against military service by gays and lesbians.

New York's historic preservation office strongly supported the historic district designation.

After the post's closure in 1948, the Army Chemical Corps and Plum Island Animal Disease Laboratory reused its buildings. The lab modified Building 257, the former Mine & Cable Storage Building, for its use, and added an external ramp for use by animal research subjects. Numerous unconfirmed stories about bioweapons research ensued.

Later in the 20th century, the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) built new facilities on the western part of the island. For over 70 years, employees who commuted to the lab from New York and Connecticut made major breakthroughs in vaccine research to prevent animal diseases, especially foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). The PIADC has played a significant role in the economy of Eastern Long Island's North Fork because of employment opportunities in biotechnology, veterinary science, and jobs for electricians, carpenters, plumbers, and other trades, including security. DARPA exercises in power grid cybersecurity have taken place on the island, providing learning opportunities in issues of national security importance.

Prominent animal disease researchers at the PIADC included:

- Dr. Maurice S. Shahan (DVM), co-director of the joint committee to assist in controlling a FMD outbreak in Mexico (1947–1952), named the first director of the laboratory (1952–1963);
- Dr. Jerry J. Callis (DVM), who studied FMD in Holland and served as Assistant Director (1956–1962) and Director of Plum Island’s laboratory (1963–1983);
- Dr. Howard L. Bachrach (PhD), who studied FMD in Denmark and became Chief Scientist and Director of Biomedical Research at Plum Island (1953–1981), made advancements in the growth of the virus for research purposes, and developed a live virus vaccine; and
- Dr. Marvin J. Grubman (PhD), whose research and isolation of the proteins in the FMD virus resulted in the development of the first recombinant (non-live virus) vaccine for one serotype of the disease.

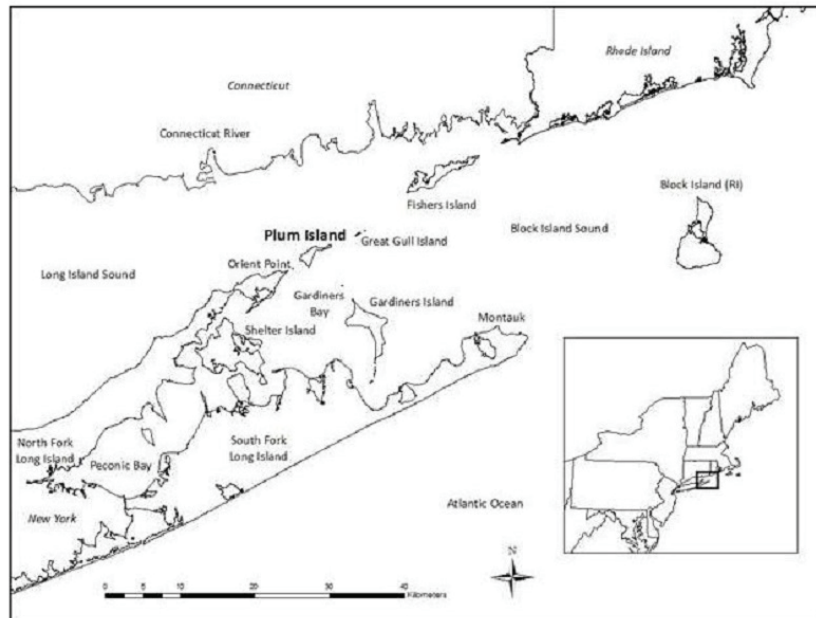
In 2022, citing the lab’s significance in science for its association with a government-supported scientific research program, New York State recommended the listing of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center on the National Register of Historic Places.

Conclusion

Plum Island should be returned to use and careful stewardship by the people under a comprehensive management plan. We envision managed, sustainable, and equitable access for the island’s original stewards, the Montaukett Indian Nation, and all members of the public. We see the designation of Plum Island as a national monument as the model offering the greatest flexibility in offering interpretation, national celebration, and co-management—involving public-philanthropic and potential public-private partnerships—of Plum Island’s many natural, historical, and cultural assets. We urge you to pass H.R. 1584. Thank you for this opportunity to present our views today.

ATTACHMENTS

Location of Plum Island, New York



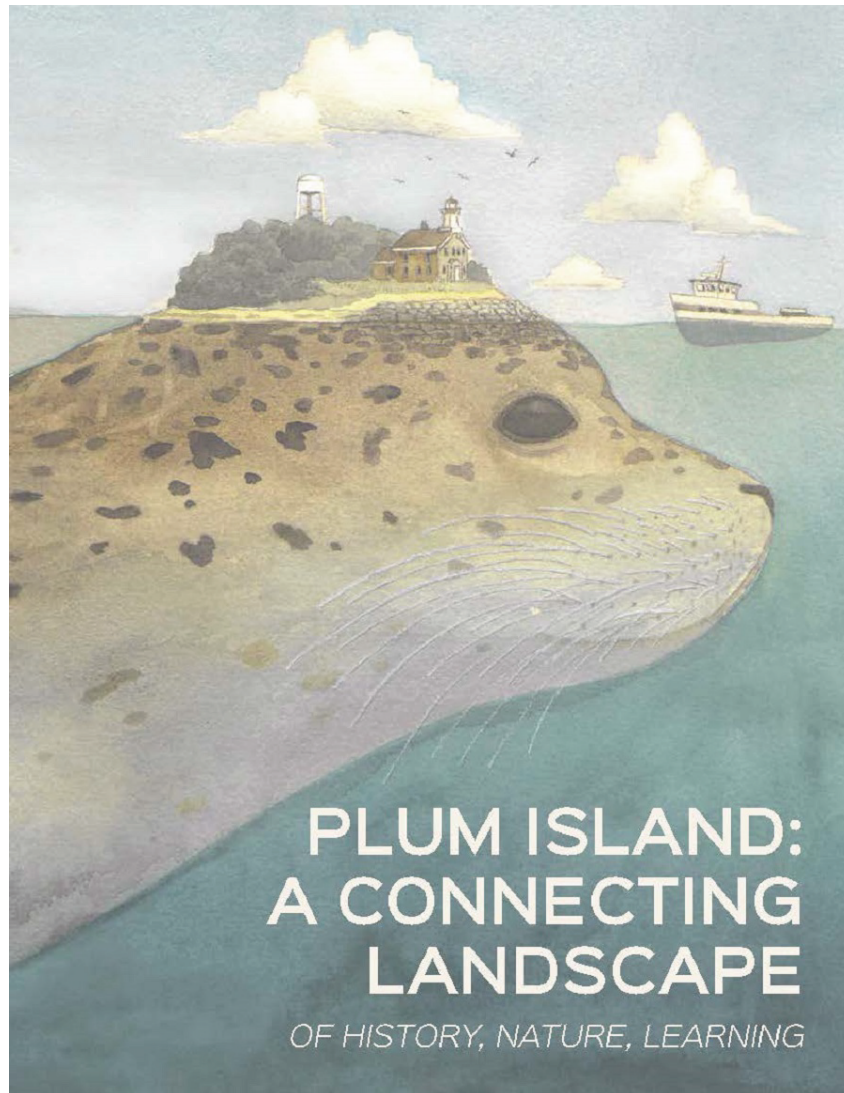
Plum Island shown with surrounding islands and points in mainland New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Islands are within New York State unless otherwise noted. *Inset:* Area of detail within the Northeast United States.

(Reproduced from: Schlesinger, M.D., A.L. Feldmann, and S.M. Young. 2012. Biodiversity and ecological potential of Plum Island, New York. New York Natural Heritage Program, Albany, New York.)

Members of the Preserve Plum Island Coalition

American Birding Association	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County	The Ink Spot Southold
American Bird Conservancy	Defend H2O	InnerSpace Scientific Diving
American Littoral Society, Northeast Chapter	East End Apiaries	Island Outreach Foundation
Andrew Sabin Family Foundation	East End Lighthouses	Long Island Audubon Council
Archipelago New York	East End Seaport Museum & Marine Foundation	Eastern Long Island Audubon
Asharoken Garden Club	Eastern Long Island Chapter of Surfrider Foundation	Great South Bay Audubon
Audubon Connecticut	East Hampton Town Natural Resources Department	Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon
Audubon New York	East Marion Community Association	Four Harbors Audubon
The Captain's Table Charters	Endangered Species Coalition	North Shore Audubon
Central New York Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology	Environment East - Peconic	North Fork Audubon
Citizen's Campaign for the Environment	Environmental Defense Fund	South Shore Audubon
Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor	Finker Wellness, Inc.	Long Island Botanical Society
Coast Defense Study Group	Fishers Island Conservancy	Long Island Environmental Voters Forum
Coastal Research and Education Society of L.I.	Fishers Island Oyster Farm	Long Island Forest Walks
Coastal Steward Long Island	Footprints In The Water, LLC	Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference
Concerned Citizens of Montauk	Foundation for Ecological Research in the Northeast	Long Island Greenways and Healthy Trails
The Connecticut Audubon Society	Friends of Plum Island	Long Island Indigenous People Museum & Research Institute
Connecticut - Rhode Island Coastal Fly Fishers	The Garden Club of East Hampton	Long Island Nature Organization
Connecticut Land Conservation Council	Gourmet Foods International	Long Island Paddlers
Connecticut Ornithological Association	Group for the East End	Long Island Pine Barrens Society
Conservation & Natural Areas Planning	Great Gull Island Project	Long Island Soundkeeper
	Henry L. Ferguson Museum - Fishers Island	Mattabesek Audubon Society
	Huntington Lighthouse Preservation Society	Mattituck-Laurel Civic Association
		Menunkatuck Audubon Society

Montaukett Indian Nation	Potapaug Audubon Society	The Trust for Public Land
Mystic Aquarium	Randall T. Parsons AICP	Third House Nature Center
Narrow River LLC	Peconic Baykeeper	Three Village Community Trust
Nassau Hiking and Outdoor Club	Peconic Land Trust	Treiber Farms
The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut	Preservation Long Island	Trimble's of Corchaug Nursery
The Nature Conservancy in New York	Quality Parks	United States Lighthouse Society
The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island	Queens County Bird Club	WATERWASH Projects
New London Maritime Society	Quogue Wildlife Refuge	Westbrook Land Conservation Trust
New York City Audubon	Regional Plan Association	Whaling Museum and Education Center of Cold Spring Harbor
New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV)	Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association	Wild Bird Crossing of Bridgehampton
New York Sailing Club	Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation	Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset
New York Section of the International Dark Sky Association	The Safina Center	Wildlife Conservation Societ
New York State Ornithological Association	Save the Bay - RI	
New York State Marine Education Association	Save Mattituck Inlet	
Northeast Sisters of Mercy/Associates, Bridgeport CT Coalition	Save the Sound	
North Fork Environmental Council	Seatuck Environmental Association	
North Shore Land Alliance	Setauket Harbor Task Force	
Norwalk River Watershed Association	Sierra Club - Connecticut Chapter	
Old Saybrook Land Trust	Sierra Club, Long Island Group	
Operation SPLASH	Sierra Club, New York City Group	
Orient Association	Southold Indian Museum	
Park & Trails New York	Southold Town Historic Preservation Commission	
	StoneRidge Conservation Committee	
	Suffolk County Legislator Steven Englebright	



Ms. Harrison's full statement along with all attachments is available for viewing at:

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II10/20240307/116866/HHRG-118-II10-Wstate-HarrisonL-20240307.pdf>

Mr. TIFFANY. Thank you, Ms. Harrison, for your testimony. Now, we are going to move to Members' questions.

First, I would like to recognize the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Crane.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple questions for Mr. Seymore.

Without the expansion of Pinedale Cemetery, is it safe to say families would have to bury their loved ones far away from their home, sir?

Mr. SEYMORE. Yes, that is correct. When you say far away, there are other cemeteries locally, but there is nothing like being able to be buried in a family plot next to your loved ones.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you.

For those of you that don't know, Pinedale is home to a substantial LDS community who celebrate the contributions of Mormon pioneers in their pursuit of religious freedom and a new homeland in the American West. The arrival of Latter Day Saints and the creation of settlements in Snowflake, Winslow, Taylor, Tuba City, and other places help lay the foundation for the 48th state.

Mr. Seymore, can you please explain to the Committee how much passing this legislation would mean for them?

Mr. SEYMORE. This is a community that is just heartfelt. And in 1976, to honor our 200th year anniversary, they built a wooden bridge over their little Pinedale entry into their community. That is the only wooden bridge still standing in the state of Arizona. So, this is rich in history, rich in pioneer history, rich in the history of our Native Americans. So, this is something that these guys, they breathe, they live the air, they farm the air. They are home people. That is what the red, white, and blue stands for. This means everything to them. It really does.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you. The last thing I want to say is the pursuit of religious freedom has helped lead to the expansion of overall success of America. It is only right for Congress to honor these contributions with the expansion of this cemetery.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I now turn to Mr. LaLota for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you, Chairman. Ms. Harrison, again, it is great that you are with us today.

In the previous panel, I think we well established that there is a decent amount of bipartisan support for our initiative to preserve Plum Island, and there certainly is overwhelming community support back on Long Island to preserve Plum Island. So, let's talk about the timing, and how that may work.

In your testimony, you said that it is critical to designate Plum Island as a national monument now. Can you tell us a little bit about what could happen to Plum Island if we don't act with a sense of urgency, such as making it a national monument?

Ms. HARRISON. Thank you for your question, Mr. LaLota. Yes, I would be happy to answer the question.

Conservation takes a long time. I am sure everyone on this Committee understands that. And we have been hoping to bring a permanent conservation solution to Plum Island since about 2011. So, 13 years in, we still don't have knowledge of the fate of Plum Island. But in the meantime, there are communities, ecological communities on Plum Island, that are beginning to deteriorate with invasive species, vines of various species overtaking some of the critical habitats that we know are there.

The New York Natural Heritage Program, which is made up of the top field scientists in New York State, did a 2015 ecological inventory across four seasons of Plum Island, and wrote a report in 2016 that is publicly available. And they identified 24 different ecological communities, several of which they considered to be significant, and almost all of which would be threatened if we can't begin management planning for Plum Island now.

We understand that the Department of Homeland Security is in the midst of decommissioning its activities at Plum Island, and they are doing quite a lot of work across the island. But their mission, their decommissioning, is not the same as bringing new conservation and care and stewardship to the resources of Plum Island, and it needs to be done soon.

Mr. LALOTA. Ms. Harrison, I want to focus specifically on the timing piece. The previous panelists suggested that there may be environmental issues which need to be remediated. If Congress waited longer, and there are those environmental issues which need to be remediated, wouldn't those environmental issues be exacerbated and made worse the longer that we wait?

Ms. HARRISON. Yes, and I am sorry I didn't answer your question more directly, but you are absolutely correct about that. And that is because when we have things like invasive, exotic species that overtake ecosystems, the native plants can't support native wildlife, and the ecosystem deteriorates.

We also need to control deer that come to the island, because they do heavily browse these areas. And we have to make sure that the species that breed on Plum Island are cared for, as well. So, there is a whole complex series of reasons why it needs to be done soon.

And also, comprehensive management planning takes time. It is not something that can be done right away. And access to Plum Island has been prohibited for studies except with very special permission, so we do need to get this underway, even if the Department of Homeland Security doesn't leave Plum Island for a while yet.

Mr. LALOTA. I have one more minute, so I want to ask you one more question relative to the studies that you just mentioned.

The previous panelist mentioned that there needs to be a certain amount of bureaucracy, and we have some patience for some minimal amount of bureaucracy with respect to studies. In your testimony, you mentioned several different studies and publications that are already publicly available, including the Professional Biodiversity Field Studies of Plum Island conducted by the New York Natural Heritage Program; a book entitled, "A World Unto Itself," and the Journal of the Suffolk County Historical Society.

Ms. HARRISON. Yes.

Mr. LALOTA. My question: Given your expertise, your background, all of your understanding of this, do you believe that those materials, which are already prepared by professionals with specific knowledge about Plum Island, could be helpful to help expedite this initiative?

Ms. HARRISON. Absolutely. They certainly can. And there are more, and we would be happy to provide a complete bibliography of what is available.

And we know that a special resource study or any other similar study could get underway right now.

Mr. LALOTA. Great. Thank you so much. And 5 seconds. Anything that we forgot?

Ms. HARRISON. Not in 1 second. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Mr. LALOTA. Thank you so much.

I yield.

Mr. TIFFANY. The gentleman yields. I would like to recognize the gentlelady from Utah for her questions at this time.

Ms. MALOY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Strong, are you confident that the Utah Division of State Parks can adequately manage these parcels for recreation, and preserve the natural resources?

Mr. STRONG. To answer that question succinctly, I would say yes.

And maybe the additional answer to that question is we are on site every day. We have full-time, dedicated staff to those areas to improve and maintain, monitor, and allow access.

Ms. MALOY. Thank you.

I am going to expand the scope of the hearing and just ask Mr. Shields one question.

Mr. Shields, for the record and for the benefit of the Committee, can you just say which university in the United States has the best undergrad experience?

Mr. SHIELDS. Southern Utah University, hands down.

[Laughter.]

Ms. MALOY. I concur. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. TIFFANY. Usually in the Federal Lands Subcommittee we do not allow such shameless plugging for states, but clearly, they have taken liberties here today.

OK, we have covered everyone here. I just want to ask a couple questions.

Mr. Hunter, we had the red, white, and blue that were referenced earlier. Basketball is all about the red, white, and blue, isn't it?

Mr. HUNTER. I was going to throw it to you, but I wasn't sure you could catch it. He did.

Mr. TIFFANY. Oh, yes, I can catch it. I can catch it, sir.

For those of us not very familiar with New York City, tell me where this location is.

Mr. HUNTER. It is at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue, the old polo grounds.

Mr. TIFFANY. Sir, would you turn on your mic?

Mr. HUNTER. Oh. This is not on? Usually, in any stadium, you can automatically hear me.

But it is at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue, and it is below Coogan's Bluff. You are familiar with that? It is in a very prime spot. If you cross the bridge, you go straight to Yankee Stadium. And it is a very large project around the Rucker Park. And generally we have various meetings there. In fact, I was running a homeless food program there in which we feed the homeless, and we develop empowerment through recreation. And we had a homeless Olympics.

So, the park has a very vast amount of things that it can do. And most of all, we have been looking at, Philip Rucker and I, Philip Rucker is the son of Rucker, we are going to do a biddy basketball clinic, where we also teach and play basketball at the same time. It is something that Rucker did very softly.

Mr. TIFFANY. Well, as a high school basketball player, I wish they could have taught height, because I could have used a couple more inches. It would have very much helped.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. TIFFANY. In the recesses of my memory, I remember reading a story about Connie Hawkins. And is it correct that Connie Hawkins once dunked over Wilt Chamberlain? And might it have been at this facility?

Mr. HUNTER. I don't like talking about Connie Hawkins because he dunked over me a couple of times.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HUNTER. But actually, I don't know if I should correct you. It was Connie Hawkins that did it in the All Star game. But the highest jump was by a Globetrotter named Jackie Jackson.

Mr. TIFFANY. That was the highest jump.

Mr. HUNTER. That was the highest jump. And then Jackie——

Mr. TIFFANY. How do you measure highest jumps?

Mr. HUNTER. Well, you measure it like this. Wilt Chamberlain put a half a dollar on top of the backboard, and Jackie Jackson took it off.

[Laughter.]

Mr. TIFFANY. And it is those stories that make this so deserving.

Mr. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes, for sure. Well, I do not have any other questions if none of the members of the panel do.

I want to thank all of you so much for taking the time to come and join us here in Washington, DC in what is a great day when we have something that only happens annually, the State of the Union speech. And it is good to have you here on a day like this. I want to thank all of you for your valuable testimony.

Members of the subcommittee—yes, sir, do you have one?

Mr. HUNTER. I would like to work with the national parks. We have before the retired Globetrotters, and we are not sympathetic, but we are very encouraged to help them in the various projects because we are all over. And right now we are working with Ms. Lynn Rapp in South Dakota in a park program that she is doing there for kids.

Mr. TIFFANY. Yes, that sounds good.

Mr. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. TIFFANY. You may want to communicate, in addition to your Representative, Mr. Espaillat, be sure to talk to his office about that, also.

Mr. HUNTER. OK.

Mr. TIFFANY. He might be able to get you pointed in the right direction for other people that could be helpful.

Mr. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. TIFFANY. Members of the Subcommittee may have some additional questions for all of you witnesses today, and we will ask

that you respond to those in writing. Under Committee Rule 3, members of the Subcommittee must submit questions to the Subcommittee Clerk by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2024. The hearing record will be held open for 10 business days for these responses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD]

Statement for the Record
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
on H.R. 3173 and H.R. 7332

H.R. 3173, Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Statement for the Record on H.R. 3173, the Northern Nevada Economic Development and Conservation Act, which provides direction for the future management of Federal lands primarily in several northern Nevada counties. H.R. 3173 provides for the conveyance of at least 9,500 acres of Federal lands for a variety of public purposes and directs the sale at fair market value or, in some cases, exchange of up to approximately 356,100 acres of Federal lands. It also designates approximately 148,000 acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as eight new wilderness areas; releases approximately 49,700 acres of existing BLM wilderness study areas (WSA); withdraws approximately 349,200 acres of Federal lands from mineral development and leasing; and takes nearly 2,700 acres of Federal lands into trust for the benefit of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California.

Finally, the bill includes numerous miscellaneous provisions that establish a Federal complex for the offices of certain land management agencies, direct the issuance of corrective patents, provide for an existing right-of-way for the GreenLink Transmission Line on parcels previously taken into trust for the benefit of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, and amend a previously enacted land law affecting White Pine County.

The Department of the Interior (Department) supports the goals of the bill as they align with important Administration priorities. President Biden highlighted the importance of conservation in his America the Beautiful Initiative, and the bill's wilderness designations and withdrawal provisions support that effort. We also support the bill's provisions that align with priorities of the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to build healthy communities and economies. The Department continues to work to facilitate and improve access to public lands for Tribes and underserved communities. We are also working to improve public health, safety, and climate resiliency, while conserving public lands for future generations. We would like to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee to address certain concerns with the bill as currently drafted, including creating new legislative maps for the bill's proposed designations, conveyances, and other land tenure actions.

The Department defers to the Department of Agriculture on provisions pertaining to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Background

The BLM manages approximately 245 million surface acres, located primarily in 12 western states, and approximately 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate. These minerals are overlain by properties managed by other Federal agencies such as the Department of Defense and USFS, as well state and private lands.

In 1976, with passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), Congress directed the BLM to retain management of most public lands, which reduced the acreage that had in previous years been available for disposal. Under FLPMA, the BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. FLPMA also provides the BLM with a clear multiple-use and sustained yield mandate that the agency implements through its land use planning and management processes.

Public Land Sales, Exchanges, & Conveyances

Section 203 of FLPMA authorizes the sale of public lands when they are identified through a public land use planning process as meeting certain criteria that make them suitable for sale. Land sales conducted under FLPMA occur at the discretion of the Secretary and are made at fair market value in accordance with Federal law. Under current BLM policy, sales are generally conducted under competitive bidding procedures to ensure fair return. In such cases, sales are widely advertised through public notices, media announcements, and on appropriate BLM websites.

Similarly, the BLM uses land exchanges to ensure effective land management. Among other purposes, land exchanges allow the BLM to acquire environmentally sensitive lands while transferring public lands into non-Federal ownership for local needs and the consolidation of scattered tracts. The BLM conducts land exchanges pursuant to section 206 of FLPMA, which authorizes the agency to undertake such exchanges, or when given specific direction by Congress.

The BLM regularly leases and conveys lands to state, local, and Tribal governments and nonprofit entities for a variety of public purposes. These leases and conveyances are typically accomplished under the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act or through direction supplied by specific Acts of Congress. Such direction allows the BLM to help states, Tribes, local communities, and nonprofit organizations obtain lands at nominal cost for important public purposes. As a matter of policy, the BLM generally supports legislative conveyances at nominal cost if the lands are appropriate for disposal, will be used for public purposes consistent with the R&PP Act, and if the conveyances include reversionary clauses to enforce this requirement.

H.R. 3173

Title I—Douglas County

Land Conveyances & Sales

Title I of H.R. 3173 directs the conveyance, upon request, of approximately 7,777 acres of Federal lands managed by the BLM and the USFS to Douglas County, Nevada, to be used for flood control or any purpose consistent with the R&PP Act. Under the bill, the BLM and USFS would convey this land subject to valid existing rights. Although this title requires that the conveyance be made for no consideration, it requires Douglas County to pay for any costs related to the conveyance (e.g., cultural and cadastral surveys). Title I also authorizes Douglas County to submit a request to purchase the reversionary interest in all or part of the land conveyed for the appraised fair market value of this interest and directs the Secretary to cover the costs of conveyance of the reversionary interest. If any of the unspecified acres is withdrawn by a Public Land Order, the Secretary is required to revoke the order to the extent necessary to permit disposal of the land.

In addition, Title I authorizes one or more sales of up to 10,031 acres of Federal lands, including the mineral estate, through a competitive bidding process at fair market value, subject to valid existing rights. Of these acres, 31 appear to be managed by the USFS, but the exact acreage and the referenced map do not explicitly identify the specific acres intended for sale. The remainder are unspecified acres of BLM-managed public lands that have been or will be identified as potentially suitable for disposal in the Carson City Consolidated Resource Management Plan, or in any subsequent amendments to that plan. The unspecified acres would be selected jointly by the BLM and the county to be offered to qualified bidders within one year of enactment. The bill also directs that not later than 30 days before any of the unspecified acres are offered for sale, the state or county may elect to obtain them for public purposes in accordance with the R&PP Act. In that event, the BLM would retain the elected lands for conveyance to the state or county.

Under Title I of H.R. 3173, proceeds from the proposed land sales would be disbursed to the state, county, and a special account in the U.S. Treasury to be used for a variety of purposes, including to reimburse costs incurred in the preparation of land sales and the trust transfers outlined in Section 121 of the title, and to acquire environmentally sensitive land, among others.

As a matter of policy, the BLM supports working with local governments to resolve land tenure issues that advance the public good. The BLM supports the goals of the public purpose conveyances contemplated in Title I, to the extent that they pertain to BLM-managed public lands, as they are generally consistent with the R&PP Act. The BLM is concerned, however, that the total acreage proposed for conveyance is larger than what is normally authorized for public purposes under the R&PP Act, which is limited to 6,400 acres to a state or political subdivisions of a state. Some of the lands to be conveyed also present recreation and resource management concerns. For example, certain parcels offer extensive off-highway vehicle and non-motorized recreational opportunities, including portions of the popular Tahoe to Pyramid Trail. In addition, existing grazing allotments would be affected, causing a reduction in the amount of grazing available to permittees. Finally, the BLM is aware that these conveyances are within an area with many cultural and paleontological resources. The BLM would like to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee on boundary modifications to avoid these acreage, recreation, and resource concerns. We also recommend that the county assume the appraisal and other administrative costs associated with acquiring the reversionary interest,

consistent with the county assuming the cost of survey and other administrative costs as part of the initial conveyance.

While the BLM does not object to the proposed land sales, we would like to work with the Sponsor and Subcommittee on minor and technical modifications to this title, including amendments regarding how the funds for the special account are managed and the proposed uses of the account. Finally, the BLM notes that the deadlines provided by the bill will be challenging to meet given current resources, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Sponsor to establish more manageable time frames. Specifically, 180 days is insufficient time to comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act, and other applicable laws.

Land to be Held in Trust

Section 121 of Title I would direct the Secretary to take approximately 2,669 acres of Federal lands into trust for the benefit of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, subject to valid existing rights, in addition to any “Section 5 lands” as specified in the bill administered by the BLM or the USFS after enactment. In addition, this section permits the Secretary concerned, in consultation and coordination with the Tribe, to carry out any fuel reduction and landscape restoration activities on the land taken into trust that would benefit the Tribe, the BLM, or the USFS.

The BLM is committed to honoring our nation-to-nation relationship with Tribal Nations, strengthening Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, and upholding the trust and treaty responsibilities that are paramount to fulfilling our mission, and the BLM supports these provisions. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee on an amendment to the bill or to provide an updated legislative map to clarify the meaning of the term “Section 5 lands,” in addition to clarifying the Secretary of the Interior’s role in taking lands into trust for the benefit of the Tribe.

Designation of the Burbank Canyons Wilderness

Section 131 of Title I designates approximately 12,330 acres of BLM-managed public lands as the Burbank Canyons Wilderness and releases approximately 1,065 acres of the existing Burbank Canyons WSA from further study. The Burbank Canyons area is comprised of rugged canyons set in the Pine Nut Mountains. Riparian areas provide important habitat for wildlife, and steep, rugged ridges contribute to the area’s scenic beauty and the recreational experiences available to hikers, horseback riders, and hunters. The BLM supports the designation of the Burbank Canyons Wilderness and the release of the remaining portion of the WSA, but we would like to work with the Sponsor and Subcommittee to refine some of the language in this section. For example, the BLM recommends the use of language that has been used frequently as standard in other similar legislation for both the designation of the wilderness and the release of the WSA. The BLM would also like to work with the Sponsor to minimize the impact of wildlife management on wilderness character and update the referenced maps and ensure all areas to be designated or released are clearly delineated.

Title II—Incline Village Fire Protection

The BLM defers to the USFS on the conveyances proposed by Title II of the bill.

Title III—Northern Nevada Flood Protection and Management

Title III of H.R. 3173 would authorize the Department to convey parcels of Federal land managed by the BLM and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to the Truckee River Flood Management Authority (TRFMA) for flood attenuation and riparian restoration along the Truckee River in Nevada. Under this title, the conveyances would be for no consideration, but TRFMA would be required to cover all conveyance costs.

While the BLM generally supports public purpose conveyances that are consistent with the R&PP Act, some of the parcels to be conveyed under this title include the Tahoe to Pyramid Trail, which is popular with the public. We would like to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee on boundary changes or other modifications to this title to avoid potential impacts to the trail. We would also like the opportunity to develop an official legislative map for the conveyance.

The BOR does not object to the conveyances, but would like to work with the Sponsor to ensure reservation of an appropriate right-of-way for one of the parcels, and to make minor technical edits to the parcel descriptions and map references.

Title IV—Ruby Mountains Protection Act

H.R. 3173 provides for the withdrawal of approximately 309,272 acres of land managed by USFS in the Ruby Mountains Subdistrict of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and approximately 39,926 acres of land managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as part of the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge from the operation of the mineral leasing laws, subject to valid existing rights and with an exception for noncommercial refuge management activities by the USFWS.

The refuge is a magnet for a wide diversity of wildlife and is strategically located along bird migration corridors serving both the Pacific and Central Flyways, which makes it one of the most important waterfowl nesting areas in the Great Basin and Intermountain West. The refuge is also key habitat for mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and sage grouse, while the fishery is popular with local anglers. The Department supports the provision and would welcome the opportunity to continue working with the sponsor and the Committee. The Department defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding provisions affecting the management of lands administered by the USFS.

Title V—Carson City Public Lands Correction

Title V of the bill would direct the conveyance, upon request, of approximately 258 acres of Federal lands to Carson City, Nevada, at no cost to the city. While the legislative map and title are unclear, we believe that most of the identified acreage is managed by the BLM. This title explicitly authorizes the city to sell, lease, or convey all or part of the lands upon their receipt, and further directs that if the city sells the land, the city must sell the land at fair market value, with proceeds to be deposited in a special account created under the title. Under Title V, the special account could be used to reimburse the cost of any surveys and appraisals for lands that are conveyed to Carson City, and to conduct wildlife habitat and restoration projects in the city. Additionally, the account could be used for the development and implementation of comprehensive hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention projects and the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands in the city, among other activities. The special account would be managed pursuant to an intergovernmental agreement between Carson City and the BLM.

In addition, this title provides for conveyance of unspecified acres of Federal lands to Carson City for expansion of a roadway and directs the BLM to dispose of approximately 28 acres of BLM-managed public lands, while allowing the city to retain certain easements for utilities. Further, Title V would direct the conveyance of approximately 17 acres from Carson City to the BLM, which the BLM is to dispose of in accordance with FLPMA.

Under FLPMA, the BLM generally requires fair market value for land leaving Federal ownership if not conveyed for a public purpose. While the BLM acknowledges the Sponsor's consideration for the disposition of proceeds generated by this title, the BLM notes that the actions directed by the title regarding realization of value if the County in turn sells the land may not be sufficient to ensure a fair return to the taxpayer for the lands conveyed or disposed out of Federal ownership. The BLM would also like to work with the Sponsor to update the referenced maps or create new maps, if necessary, that accurately depict the boundaries of the areas to be conveyed per the title. Lastly, the BLM notes that the timelines provided for the actions required by this title would be difficult to achieve, and we would like to work with the Sponsor to consider a more feasible deadline.

Title VI—Pershing County Economic Development

Checkerboard Land Resolution

Subtitle A of Title VI directs the sale, at fair market value or through an equal value exchange, of up to approximately 334,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands in Pershing County, Nevada, that have been identified as potentially suitable for disposal as part of the BLM's land use planning process. This subtitle further requires that all lands authorized for sale or exchange be appraised using mass appraisal methodology within one year of enactment and every five years thereafter. Subtitle A also requires that the Secretary offer to exchange all eligible land within one year.

In addition, this subtitle directs the sale for fair market value of select public lands in the county that are currently encumbered by a mining claim, millsite, or tunnel site to a qualified entity. The bill defines qualified entities as the owner or authorized leaseholder of the mining claims, mill sites, or tunnel sites currently existing on any portion of the lands to be sold. The qualified entity would assume all costs of the sales, including survey, appraisal, and administrative costs. Proceeds from the sales would be disbursed to the state, county, and a special account in the

U.S. Treasury for several specific purposes, including reimbursing costs associated with preparing sales, habitat conservation and restoration, and securing public access to Federal lands, among others. Lastly, Subtitle A provides for the conveyance of ten acres of Federal land to county for use as a cemetery.

While the BLM generally supports the consolidation of public land to provide for more orderly land management while ensuring the conservation of natural and cultural resources, we also support a process that ensures a fair return to the taxpayer when public lands are conveyed, exchanged, or sold out of Federal ownership. The BLM recognizes the Sponsor's efforts to address the checkerboard pattern of landownership in this area, but we are concerned that the scope of the sales and transfers contemplated by this subtitle may be overly broad. The BLM would also like to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee to develop a legislative map depicting the lands proposed for sale or exchange under this subtitle.

Further, the BLM recommends that the Sponsor consider expanding the allowable uses for the proceeds deposited in the special account to include processing and managing conservation designations in the county; development of parks, trails, and natural areas in the county, pursuant to a cooperative agreement; capital improvements on Federal lands within the county; and reimbursement of any costs incurred by the BLM for oversight of expenditures from the account.

Finally, the personnel the BLM would need to process these land transfers are the same personnel currently employed in a wide variety of other vital land management issues, including processing renewable energy and transmission rights-of-way applications and land use authorizations for community needs. Therefore, the time frames outlined in this subtitle will necessarily have consequences for a wide variety of other users of the public lands. The BLM would like to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee on more manageable time frames to implement the contemplated transfers.

Wilderness Areas

Subtitle B of Title VI provides for the designation of seven wilderness areas totaling approximately 136,600 acres of BLM-managed public lands. This subtitle would also release approximately 48,600 acres of public land from WSA status, allowing these areas to be managed according to the existing BLM land use plans. The seven new wilderness areas include the Cain Mountain Wilderness, which consists of approximately 12,339 acres; the Bluewing Wilderness, which consists of approximately 24,900 acres; the Selenite Peak Wilderness, which consists of approximately 22,822 acres; the Mount Limbo Wilderness, which consists of approximately 11,855 acres; the North Sahwave Wilderness, which consists of approximately 13,875 acres; the Grandfathers Wilderness, which consists of approximately 35,339 acres; and the Fencemaker Wilderness, which consists of 14,942 acres.

The new wilderness areas that would be designated by this subtitle, if enacted, would help protect fragile desert ecosystems while providing important habitat for Greater sage-grouse, pronghorn antelope, mule deer, desert bighorn sheep, and many other species of wildlife and plants. The proposed Mount Limbo Wilderness, for example, features a spectacular landscape of granite outcrops, basaltic flows, and alluvial fans that is perfect for backcountry exploration. The BLM supports each of these designations, as they would conserve habitat and provide excellent opportunities for hiking, hunting, rock climbing, camping, and horsepacking for those who wish to experience the solitude of rugged canyons and dramatic vistas of the Nevada desert. The BLM would like to work with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee on minor and technical amendments to this subtitle, such as the inclusion of wilderness designation language that has become standard for this type of legislation and updating the referenced maps to ensure all areas proposed for designation or release are clearly delineated.

Additionally, Section 622 of this subtitle allows for the construction of a temporary telecommunications device for law enforcement or agency administrative use in the Selenite Peak Wilderness. Any telecommunications device authorized under the section may not be placed for more than seven years. This section further requires that temporary telecommunications devices and their placement must comply with the Wilderness Act, all applicable laws, and to the maximum practicable extent, be located in a manner that minimizes impacts on the recreational and other wilderness values of the area.

The BLM notes that as written, the provisions authorizing placement of temporary telecommunications devices in the Selenite Peak Wilderness contradict current law, regulation, and policy. Specifically, section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act prohibits such installations. The BLM would welcome the opportunity to work with the Sponsor to explore options that would help achieve the goals of the bill while complying with the Wilderness Act and related regulations. Potential solutions could

include excluding the temporary telecommunications site from the wilderness boundary or providing for the site to be added to the Wilderness once the temporary use has ended. In addition, the BLM recommends reassessing the seven-year period provided to ensure it meets current needs.

Title VII—Federal Complex

Title VII of H.R. 3173 would require the Department to establish a Federal complex building in Reno, Nevada, that would house certain offices in Nevada for the BLM, BOR, USFS, USFWS, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Department supports the goal of increasing efficiencies as well as providing for ease of collaboration between Federal agencies. However, we are concerned that the practicalities and requirements of building a new multi-agency Federal complex, as envisioned in the bill, may not be an efficient use of resources given the scale of the proposal. For example, the operation of Hoover Dam requires BOR staff on-site. The Department looks forward to working with the Sponsor to explore alternative proposals and ideas for increasing the effectiveness of Federal land management agencies in the region.

Title VIII—White Pine County

Title VIII would amend section 312 of the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act (Public Law 109-432) to expand the categories for disposition of proceeds authorized by that law to include additional public services, as determined by the county. In addition, Title VIII would insert a deadline for the conveyance of BLM-managed public lands to White Pine County that were authorized by section 352 of Public Law 109-432 for the expansion of the Ely Airport, the expansion of the White Pine County Industrial Park, and for sale through a competitive bidding process for nonresidential development related to these two expansions. Per the provisions of this title, if the conveyances are not completed within 120 days of enactment of H.R. 3173, the BLM would be required to convey all right, title, and interest in those parcels to the county. It appears that this requirement would eliminate the reversionary requirement associated with these conveyances. Additionally, this title would amend section 352 of Public Law 109-432 to remove the competitive bidding process associated with the sales of conveyed land for non-residential development and instead direct the county to use a process consistent with section 244 of the Nevada Revised Statutes. Lastly, this title would authorize the BLM to issue corrective patents of up to five acres in the county where surveying errors exist.

The BLM notes that all lands described in section 352 of Public Law 109-432 have already been conveyed, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Sponsor on technical amendments to the title to ensure it reflects current land status. In addition, we are concerned that the reference to section 244 of the Nevada Revised Statutes would require the Federal government to interpret whether the county has complied with state law. The BLM also notes that the disposal method described in the Nevada Revised Statutes may not result in the highest price and greatest benefit to taxpayers. For these reasons, the BLM recommends that the Sponsor retain the competitive bidding process in the underlying law.

Finally, regarding the corrective patents referenced in this title, the BLM notes that the specified land is no longer under BLM jurisdiction. It is unclear whether corrective patents could be issued in this situation, and the 60-day timeline provided by the title is insufficient to allow for the necessary research to determine if the BLM can issue a corrective patent. The BLM welcomes the opportunity to work with the Sponsor to explore this issue further.

Title IX—Fernley Economic Development Act

The Fernley Economic Development Act, contained in Title IX, would convey approximately 12,085 acres of BLM-managed public lands to the city of Fernley, Nevada, for fair market value. This title directs gross proceeds from the sale, lease, or conveyance of this land to be deposited into the special account created by the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act of 1998 (SNPLMA).

The BLM understands the Sponsor's goal is to make public land available for acquisition to facilitate the growth of local communities that are surrounded by Federal lands. The BLM would welcome the opportunity to work with the Sponsor to address concerns with the large scale of the conveyances directed by the title. In addition, the BLM notes that approximately half of the acres to be conveyed under this title are currently identified as potentially suitable for disposal under the existing land use plan.

Title X—Conveyances to the City of Sparks

Under Title X of the bill, the BLM would direct the conveyance of 40 acres of BLM-managed public lands to the City of Sparks, Nevada, for the purpose of establishing a public cemetery. This title would also convey approximately 714 acres of BLM-managed public lands for the creation of two public parks for the city. Title X requires the City of Sparks to pay all costs associated with the conveyances, and the public lands conveyed for the development of the public parks would also include a reversionary interest.

The BLM generally does not object to the conveyances under this title. As discussed above, the BLM typically supports conveyances for specific public purposes that are consistent with the R&PP Act and include a reversionary interest. The BLM recommends the provision regarding the public lands conveyed for parks be amended to increase consistency with the R&PP Act. In addition, the BLM would appreciate the opportunity to develop an updated legislative map for these conveyances.

Title XI—General Conveyance Provisions

Title XI of H.R. 3173 would require the conveyance, upon request, of any public land within the State of Nevada that is leased, patented, authorized as a right-of-way, otherwise approved for use pursuant to the R&PP Act, FLPMA, NEPA, or any other applicable Federal law and has a permanent public facility already constructed—or where such a facility may be constructed at some point in the future—to an eligible entity by a quitclaim deed. Eligible entities would include the State of Nevada, political subdivisions of the State, units of local government, or a regional governmental entity in any county in Nevada. Lands conveyed under this title would continue to have a reversionary interest held by the Department. As a matter of policy, the BLM generally supports public purpose conveyances that are consistent with the R&PP Act. However, the BLM has substantial concerns with the language in this title authorizing the required conveyances because it is overly broad and could have significant unintended consequences as currently drafted. The BLM would like to work with the Sponsor to better understand the intent of this title.

Title XI would also allow for the movement of sand and gravel resources by the non-Federal surface owners of land acquired by them from the United States under certain authorities if the movement is conducted to recontour or balance the surface estate or is disposed of at off-site landfills. In addition, Title XI would make a technical correction to the reference to the map associated with a conveyance of Federal Land in Storey County, Nevada, that was included as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291). The BLM would welcome the opportunity to explore how to achieve the Sponsor's goal of allowing the movement of sand and gravel to recontour or balance the surface estate belonging to non-Federal entities. The BLM does not support allowing sand and gravel resources to be transported for off-site use unless the BLM receives fair market value for the resource.

Title XII—GreenLink West Project

Lastly, Title XII of H.R. 3173 would allow the BLM to maintain the existing right-of-way for the GreenLink Transmission Line on the Walker Lake Parcel in Mineral County, Nevada, which was taken into trust for the benefit of the Walker River Paiute Tribe as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Public Law 117-263). This title provides that the consent of the Tribe for the use of the parcel for the transmission project will be deemed to be obtained by the Department subject to review under NEPA, and further directs the Department to approve a right-of-way agreement between the Tribe and the project applicant as soon as practicable after the parcel is taken into trust and before commencement of project construction. This agreement must address applicable provisions under part 169 of title 25, Code of Federal Regulations (or successor regulations). The BLM supports these provisions, as they reflect the current and ongoing efforts to work with the Walker River Paiute Tribe to address the right-of-way.

Conclusion

The BLM appreciates the interest of the sponsor and the Subcommittee in these important public land management issues in northern Nevada, and we look forward to working further with you on them. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a Statement for the Record on H.R. 3173.

H.R. 7332, Utah State Parks Adjustment Act**Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Statement for the Record on H.R. 7332, the Utah State Parks Adjustment Act. H.R. 7332 directs the Department of the Interior (Department) to convey several small, isolated parcels of public lands (approximately 510 acres) managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within and around Antelope Island State Park and Wasatch Mountain State Park to the State of Utah at no cost. The legislation would consolidate landownership within the two state parks, which would improve manageability, and dispose of isolated Federal parcels that are difficult to manage. The BLM supports the bill.

The bill also proposes the conveyance of federally owned parcels administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS) to the State of Utah for inclusion in Fremont Indian State Park. The Department defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding provisions affecting the management of lands administered by the USFS.

H.R. 7332

The isolated Federal parcels within Antelope Island State Park total approximately 280 acres surrounded by the Great Salt Lake, and are inherently difficult to manage by the BLM due to location, small size, and lack of access. The isolated Federal parcels near Wasatch Mountain State Park are similarly difficult for the BLM to manage due to location, small size, isolation from other public land, and lack of access. The Federal parcels within and around the Wasatch Mountain State Park were first identified as potentially suitable for disposal to the state, and inclusion into the Wasatch Mountain State Park, in the BLM's Park City Management Framework Plan issued in 1975. Most of these isolated parcels are only accessible through Wasatch Mountain State Park. The Wasatch Mountain State Park conveyance would add approximately 230 acres to the state park.

The BLM welcomes the opportunity to work with the Sponsor to continue to define inholdings administered by the BLM for conveyance as proposed by the bill. The BLM is currently developing a supplemental survey plat to evaluate the complex mineral survey history of the area, develop accurate legislative maps, and ultimately execute the proposed transfer. Further, the BLM would like to work with the Sponsor to explore the potential transfer of additional nearby BLM-managed isolated parcels previously identified for disposal in BLM land use planning documents.

The BLM regularly transfers public lands to local governments and nonprofits for a variety of public purposes. These transfers are typically accomplished under the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act or through direction from specific Acts of Congress. As a matter of policy, the BLM generally supports these legislative conveyances at no or low cost if the lands are appropriate for disposal and will be used for public purposes consistent with the R&PP Act.

The BLM understands that the proposed management of the lands for conveyance to the State of Utah for inclusion in the state parks would be for public purposes. The BLM would appreciate the opportunity to work with the Sponsor on legislative language ensuring that the management of the lands conveyed is consistent with the standards of the R&PP Act and addresses the costs of the conveyance. Additionally, the BLM would like to work with the Sponsor on a few minor technical modifications to the bill, and notes that the lands proposed for conveyance would require a patent or quitclaim deed per regulation and policy.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record.

Submission for the Record by Rep. Tiffany

**NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
Washington, DC**

March 7, 2024

House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NPCA support for H.R. 1647

Dear Representative:

Since 1919, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. On behalf of our 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, we write to share our position on H.R. 1645—Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act.

H.R. 1647—Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act: NPCA supports this legislation to redesignate Salem Maritime National Historic Site (NHS) to Salem Maritime National Historical Park and to initiate a boundary study to identify opportunities to preserve and interpret our shared defense and maritime heritage. This redesignation aligns with the increasing number of historic and cultural resources that are protected and interpreted at Salem Maritime NHS. Since the original designation in 1938, Salem Maritime NHS has acquired new properties that broadened national narratives and educate visitors about the contributions of Salem, MA to global maritime trade, northern slavery and immigration. Redesignating Salem Maritime would serve as a more accurate account of the breadth of resources and cultural landscapes that are protected and interpreted by NPS in Salem, MA. This legislation also instructs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a boundary study to evaluate the inclusion of nearby sites and resources associated with Salem's maritime history, coastal defenses and military history, including National Guard and militia activity that date back to the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Leading up to the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, this boundary study would uncover new opportunities to preserve Salem's defense and maritime history for future generations.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

TUCKER JOHNSON,
Interim Legislative Director, Government Affairs

Submissions for the Record by Rep. Amodei

Letters of support for H.R. 3173, from the following:

1. Douglas County Board of County Commissioners
2. Board of Commissioners, Minden, Nevada
3. Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
4. Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Missoula, MT
5. City of Fernley
6. Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Sparks, Nevada
7. Carson City, Nevada—Office of the Mayor
8. Pershing County Board of Commissioners
9. Tahoe Reno Industrial Center

These documents are part of the hearing record and are being retained in the Committee's official files:

The documents are available for viewing at:

<https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II10/20240307/116866/HHRG-118-II10-20240307-SD005.pdf>

